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ART THERAPISTS' WORK WITH TEXTILES

by

Sarah Potter

A research paper presented to the

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY
LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Marital and Family Therapy

April 29, 2019

Signature Page

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Abstract

This research project aims to explore how art therapists use textiles in clinical practice and personal artmaking and to learn about the perceived benefits and challenges of this type of work. The study utilizes a Qualtrics survey, with 70 participants, and a focus group methodology, with 4 art therapists. Through the analysis of the participants' conversations, artwork, and survey information, emergent themes were identified related to examining biases of gender identity, challenges related to considerations of time, the repetitive and slow nature that are particular mindful qualities of textile making, potentially heightened benefits of textile work with children and adolescents, and a call to reexamine boundaries of technique with the inclusion of unstructured textile exploration. Art therapists described benefits for clients particularly related to trauma work, grounding, and sense of mastery. These themes emphasized findings that illuminate the value of working with textiles in personal artmaking and in art therapeutic environments.

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Introduction

The Study Topic

The purpose of this research study is to illuminate art therapists' experiences and perceptions of using textile art in their clinical work and their personal artmaking practice. The topic is researched qualitatively, first through a survey sent to alumni of the Loyola Marymount University Marital and Family Therapy program. This survey explores how textiles are used by art therapists, asking first which forms of textile arts are used by alumni, how often textile artmaking practices are used, and what the perceived strengths and challenges are when working with textiles. Other data such as age and gender of art therapist was also collected. Next, a focus group was structured with regards to emergent themes from the survey. The focus group began with informal discussion of personal textile practices, then included an artmaking engagement with textile materials, generating additional data. The group's questions were derived from data gathered in the survey, and broadly surrounded themes around the experience of working with textiles and the meaning attributed to these actions. The research first identifies which art therapists use textiles, then looks to learn more about which artmaking practices are used, as well as why art therapists may choose to engage personally or professionally with textiles. There is the hope that this study will support discussion of the role of textiles within art therapy and illuminate some of the ways that textiles are currently being used in practice.

Significance of the Study

There are currently a handful of research studies that have been done in clinical practice involving textiles, whether under the umbrella of art therapy (Baker, 2006; Bookbinder, 2016; Collier, 2016; Hania, 2018; Garlock, 2016; Homer, 2015; Segalo 2014) or occupational therapy

(Riley, 2008; Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013; Dickie, 2011). Although this is a promising beginning in the study of textiles in art therapy, it is a subject worthy of further exploration, under the larger question of how textiles can be used in art therapy. The findings of this study hope to illuminate how art therapists use textiles personally or professionally, and how they think about this experience, both in terms of the strengths and challenges. In the field of art therapy there has been some division amongst art and craft (Kapitan, 2011). Kapitan (2011) says that the value of craft has been overlooked in the field of art therapy and writes of the pleasure of seeing studies with crafts in art therapy being done (p. 95). This division could be ignoring the potential for healing found by those studying therapeutic work involving textiles (Collier, 2016; Moxley, Feen-Calligan, Washington, & Garriott, 2011).

Personally, I wonder if, and how, I will incorporate textile based artmaking in my art therapy practice, as I have begun to in my practicum placement with young children. My grandmother taught me to needlepoint when I was eight, and later introduced me to sewing, embroidery, knitting, and crochet projects. Textiles connected me with other women, both in my community and in my ancestry, and provided me a sense mastery from a young age. In adolescence, I intuitively found myself knitting and needlepointing to cope with challenges. The stillness, textural quality, and focused nature helped me self-regulate, without needing to think explicitly in those terms. After college, I moved to rural Peru to work for an organization that supported Quechuan women's financial and personal empowerment structured through five weaving cooperatives. By witnessing both the process and the product of these weaving cooperatives, my dichotomized understanding of art and craft, honed in a liberal arts college, was broken forever. In my second practicum at an early intervention day treatment program I have worked with textiles, making simple weavings or wrap dolls, in groups and individually with 4-5

year olds and have seen positive effects. The young children appear to enjoy the sensory qualities of the material and the sense of competence gained from working on a weaving or wrapping skill. I want to continue to learn about textiles and how they fit into my emerging identity as an art therapist, by exploring other art therapists' ideas about this intersection.

Background of the Study Topic

Textiles have been created for thousands of years (Collier, 2011; Brown, 2012). The earliest bone needle is from around 30,000 BCE and is thought to have stitched together holes, punched into skins and furs (Brown, 2012). From ancient times, these arts have evolved and branched out into many directions. For many years, textile makers, often female, made pieces for personal use, home use, or other aesthetic purposes (Kelly, 2013). Following the industrial revolution, a shift from homemade to factory-made textiles began. Gradually there were fewer people creating textiles in the home or other social spaces (Collier, 2011). A resurgence of working with textiles began in the 2000s (Collier, 2011; Kelly, 2013). Kelly (2013) writes about an important shift for many creators, from making out of the necessity of an item towards making for the sole purpose of pleasure. Many writers of traditional books on textiles note their healing powers, such as Wellesley-Smith's (2015) book which describes the contemplative and mindful quality of working with textiles.

In art therapy there has been some focus on textiles in recent years. Collier's (2011) writing is the only dedicated book to the specific subject of art therapy and textiles at the time of writing this paper. Collier mentions the dearth of literature on the subject, but that there are a growing handful of studies involving textiles (Collier, 2011). There are many studies that point a textile practice benefitting the creator whether through weaving (Reynolds, 1999), embroidery (Segalo, 2014), quilting (Dickie, 2011; McGinnis, 2014; Moxley, Feen-Calligan, Washington, & Garriott, 2011), or knitting (Corkhill & Morris, 2013). These studies, and their mostly positive findings, may spring forth more interest in the intersection of using textiles and art therapy.

Literature Review

This literature review explores the usage of textile arts with therapeutic aims. Major categorical themes that emerged from the literature include the relationship between textile making and feminism, group settings when working with textiles, and the use of textile arts in self defined craft based research. The majority of literature found was of work being done in group settings with research subjects that identified, or were identified, as female. I searched through databases on the subjects of art therapy, feminism, sociology, and occupational therapy. Additionally, some books and articles that were specifically textile focused were reviewed, although many books on this subject are instructional in nature. Not all books could be included in this search, or were found relevant. This work begins with a discussion of the literature found that relates to feminism and textile arts, as much of the literature reveals gender as an important aspect of the work. Next in the review, therapy groups working with textile arts are explored. The third component of the review is a discussion of the dual identity textiles hold as an art and a craft. The ways that this has influenced its use and study is explored. I searched through several types of databases in writing this literature review, including art therapy, feminism, sociology, and occupational therapy.

Textile Arts and Feminism

The inclusion of complementary and alternative approaches to medicine within conventional medical care establishment, represents a growing awareness that Western cultures are out of balance, and are in need of consciously reconnecting with the sacred feminine whose strength lies in her capacity of communion, communication and connection. (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 2001, p.36)

Dosmantes-Beaudry points out a natural linkage between the arts and the feminine; this correlation is even higher in the realm of textile arts, which have long been considered “women’s work” (Kelly, 2013). The literature pointed towards more work being done with textiles in art therapy with women than with men, as well as more women engaging in textiles personally (Collier, 2016.) When examining texts describing women and stitching arts, three areas of interest arose. Firstly, why are women drawn to create with textiles? Secondly, to what extent are textile arts connected with feminist themes? Thirdly, an examination of the dominance of female textile art groups versus individual and solitary creation.

Why women create.

When Olivetti (2017), a Jungian analyst, interviewed Susan Gangsei on her use of weaving as a way of coping after her husband’s death. Gangsei said, “There was a big element of enduring, but weaving and creating images that represented it was my way of creating value and meaning” (Olivetti, 2017, p. 123). Much of the literature also approaches this essential idea of creating value and meaning (Cohen, 2013; Moxley, Feen-Calligan, Washington, & Garriot, 2011; Riley 2008). Collier’s (2011) book describes many reasons women have for creating textiles including aesthetic need, feeling grounded, bringing about positive feelings, taking away negative feelings, distraction, identity, social satisfaction, cognitive stimulation, coping with poor physical health, continuing family tradition, and the joy of making for others. Collier’s (2016) study looked at a larger population sample of 821 participants using a survey method. An interesting finding was that when there was an intention or understanding around using textiles to change negative moods, it was more effective at creating a change. It further hypothesized and

supported an argument that personal enjoyment was a larger motivator for creating work than financial compensation (Collier, 2016).

In therapeutic studies, sometimes the initial idea to work with textiles has come from the client (Reynold, 1999; Blakeman, 2013; Heard, 2009). Reynold's (1999) article described how the therapist viewed working with textiles as an effective combination with exposure therapy. The tapestry created in the study was of an activating photograph that the client was then required to sit with for many hours (Reynold, 1999). Blakeman (2013) and Heard (2009) described how women with schizophrenia used embroidery as a means of coping, again unprompted by professionals. Positive outcomes were also found in Homer's (2015) article which described her initial development of this strategy with a 25-year-old Caucasian woman diagnosed with severe mental illness and borderline personality and bipolar disorders. Through creating a polar fleece blanket together, her client gained connection with her therapist, a textural way to self-soothe in therapy, and a lasting symbol of the hard work she was doing. The client was able to process traumas of sexual abuse and miscarriage, aided by the self-regulating nature of rhythmic work. Through this work, her limbic system and somatic responses to trauma changed as well. The client's diagnosis of borderline personality disorder was removed, and PTSD was added helping the client integrate trauma as part of her life narrative (Homer, 2015).

Textile arts, social expectations, and rebellion.

While, as stated above, there are many and varied benefits to participating in textile arts for women, the literature illuminates how there is one other strong motivating factor for why women create using stitching: traditional societal pressures which categorize this work as exclusively within the female sphere. However, in the past three decades the literature also

revealed how there has been a resurgence of knitting and textile work with explicitly feminist and/or rebellious undertones. This creates an interesting contradiction where some women who participate in textile creation and arts are traditionally feminine and conservative, while others -- Stich n' Bitch participants, Yarn Bombers, and the Neo Knitters to name a few -- embrace and subvert these acts to represent more independent and empowering spirit (Kelly, 2013).

Much of what has been written about this phenomenon has been in the arena of knitting. Marsh (2016) described how the knitting photographer and writer, Elizabeth Zimmerman helped change the connotations of knitting by emphasizing individual choices in design and materials, rather than simply following instructions. Fields (2014) explained a similar identity shift, describing the efforts of young women to rebrand an art form associated with “grannies” to be considered hip, cool, and perhaps even rebellious. Fields (2014) wrote, “The resurgence of knitting among new audiences is emblematic of the increasing diffusion of cultural practices across established social, political, and geographic boundaries to new actors” (p. 163). Even if participants do not view their individual actions as inherently feminist, the act of people who are not traditionally associated with knitting participating in this art form is rebellious and revolutionary by itself.

This insight is important due to the differing views, and at times ambivalence, many knitters feel about the pop culture connection between knitting and feminism. Kelly (2013) used personal interviews and ethnographic methods to investigate this link and found, “Within the knitting community, there is not a consensus that knitting is feminist; however, the arguments that knitting is anti-feminist is almost always soundly rejected by feminist and non-feminist knitters alike” (p. 137). Similarly, Ostrovsky (2012) wrote in her personal exploration on the many contradictions in contemporary knitting culture concluded, “Handicrafts will always be

linked to the history of women's work, with its multiple meanings, empowering or oppressive -- or both at the same time" (p. 19). Perhaps this distinction served to be even more empowering than that which is explicitly feminist, as it brought women who consider themselves ideologically opposed together through common interests. Marsh (2016) wrote, "It challenges the narrative of extreme division between feminist and conservative American women by offering a nuanced view of women engaged in an apparently conservative practice of domesticity but moving increasingly, and even radically, towards increased public and private autonomy with regard to that practice" (p.13). This coming together represents a radical shift, just as the acceptance of feminists in a traditionally feminine activity is new and exciting. Feminists used to have to operate in male-dominated spheres to assert their independence and equality, but now are turning back to knitting and reaping the many benefits along with the power of self-definition (Kelly, 2013).

The importance of women's groups.

A major theme throughout the literature was the power of the group, and specifically the powerful nature of the group therapy context used with women. Many of the women's groups were created out of a mutual experience of oppression, trauma, or pain. Other groups were written about which were formed out of mutual interest for textiles and sometimes for activism or what Ostrovsky (2012) terms "craftivism" (p.16). Regardless of the reason, literature relating to textile arts and its creation in therapeutic and nontherapeutic contexts was dominated by discussions of group work and demonstrated the benefits of women coming together either to work on projects individually or cooperate on one piece together.

The concept of weaving and group work discussed in the literature offers literal and metaphorical significance to the growth process. Govender (2017) discussed the many benefits of group art therapy work for new mothers centered around weaving and cloth doll making. She highlighted increased hope, fun, learning about ourselves from others, increased self-esteem, decreased depression, and mirroring behaviors as potential benefits (p. 368). However, she also highlighted the symbolic significance of new mothers needing to integrate their own lived experience with communal and, at times oppressive, definitions of motherhood. She used her own comparison of new mother to a spider to display the metaphoric nature of weaving, writing, "A new mother, who weaves popular social discourse with her lived reality, is metaphorically similar to a spider weaving her web" (p. 362). The ability to work in a group, could open up important avenues to explore this combining of personal and communal experience.

The same benefits can apply to memory, even -- or perhaps especially -- memories of trauma, as Segalo (2014) described in her case study on a therapeutic weaving group for black women in South Africa, who lived through apartheid. She documented a three-month embroidery project with ten women between the ages of 45 and 75 in Gauteng, South Africa. The women met biweekly with Segalo to work on personal embroidery projects depicting memories from apartheid. Segalo wrote, "They used this space to reflect on the difficulty of going back into their childhoods and revisiting memories that had been buried. Most of them expressed how difficult journeying back had been, but also how important it is to remember so others can know and learn about the past through their stories" (p. 48). A process that was both individual and communal, helped the women sort out elements of both individual and national traumas in their own stories. At the same time, the women gained the very concrete benefits of mutual understanding and

connection experienced by so many women when working on textile art in therapeutic or craft-based groups (Segalo, 2014).

Textile Focused Groups Working Within Culturally Specific Contexts

Much of the literature examining the therapeutic use of textile arts and stitching related to specific cultural contexts where this medium feels especially appropriate. Because all cultures have some relationship to textile making, it can be a nearly universal art form compared to other media more popular in the Western context of most art therapy literature, but less familiar around the world. The literature suggests how the use of already-familiar stitching and weaving skills can be especially beneficial when the ability to learn new art forms is hindered by language barriers or mental limitations, such as extreme reactions to trauma.

Geography specific studies.

Stitching arts are historically geographically specific. You can source a textile to a region based on certain stitching styles or patterning. The type of interaction with the material, as well as the materials themselves speak to the location in which a textile was made. The book 'Slow Stitch' explored slowing down in life through having a textile practice includes a section titled Cross-cultural activity (Wellesley-Smith, 2015). This resource delved into practices such as making kantha quilts in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, Japanese boro mending techniques. Using textiles in a specifically therapeutic setting abroad has been written about in South Africa (Segalo, 2014), Canada (Duchaine, 1991), and Gaza (Weyermann, 2007). The literature illustrated how the more knowledge that the researchers had of an area and of that culture, the greater the likelihood of a successful project based upon understanding. Weyermann (2007) in

particular described using a three step questioning tool to define the culturally and situationally appropriate treatment plan. She reported on the evolution of a long-term project in Gaza, where staff had recognized the limited sustained effectiveness of individual therapy. Using the questioning tool, the staff discovered the empowerment female patients felt in their sewing and knitting vocational trainings. As a result, the program changed to give each woman a personalized treatment plan, engage more in group work, and treat the relationship of therapeutic and vocational training as holistically connected. Staff initially had a hard time bridging the divide, but Weyermann (2007) described the change, saying, "Yet in deciding to recognize the interdependence of emotions, social relations and economic perspectives and the interaction between individual wellbeing and socio-political conditions, they began to enjoy expanding their boundaries, leaving their walled compound and venturing into the communities" (p. 94). This freedom to be responsive and use materials that local populations already feel enthusiastic about aided the therapeutic process. Stitching arts and textile creation occurs all over the world. Different regions and countries have different techniques, materials, and histories of stitching. Learning more about the cultural background in terms of nationality was identified as an important step and potential strength for art therapy programs working around the world.

Textile arts and traumas of survivors of war and refugees.

The literature suggested that cultural sensitivity and flexibility are especially important when working the survivors of war and refugees. Art therapy is often used with these populations due to language barriers and limitations of traditional talk therapy. Textile arts are often specifically appropriate when working with female refugees and survivors of trauma, because

women traditionally have some experience with the art form, while they may have never used a crayon or made a sculpture with playdough.

Hania (2017) described as a call to action to create art therapy programs with an embroidery element for the influx of female refugees moving to Canada. In doing so, she examined how group work, focused on the arts or stitching work has been successfully implemented with female refugee populations in other countries. In particular, she looked at a 10 week course in the UK called “Journeys of Resilience” with a photography element, and the Lebanese NGO Basmeh & Zeitoneh’s embroidery workshops to provide economic empowerment to women in refugee camps. Hania (2017) used their success combined with a cultural history of Syrian women using embroidery to create narrative art to argue that embroidery focused group therapy would be effective as “an opportunity to express trauma, build community, and explore meaning” (p. 37). Throughout the article, Hania (2017) constructed an excellent argument about the need for art therapy groups specifically for Syrian women in Canada and the potential benefits of centering such a practice around embroidery and other stitching arts.

While Garlock (2016) also recommended using stitching arts therapeutically when working with refugees, she had more direct experience with these populations to draw on than Hania (2017). Based on her experience working with patients, training therapists and graduate students, and her own familial experiences, she showed how diversely effective sewing and textile artwork can be in a variety of contexts. She was particularly focused on the use of narrative forms of textile art, such as *arpillera* or story cloths. While she described a growing body of literature regarding the increased use of sewing in art therapy, she explained that there is not enough that explores the benefits of stitching art for trauma survivors. Most relevantly,

Garlock (2016) described her involvement as an instructor in the International NGO Common Threads which trains mental health professionals to use story clothes to help women process gender-violence. The pilot program began with Colombian refugees living in Ecuador. Further projects were established in Nepal and Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by wider expansion globally. In workshops, women were encouraged to portray traumatic experiences, moments of grief, and difficult conditions through story clothes. Also important to note, the story cloths were used exclusively in group settings and many of the groups decided to keep meeting weekly after the twelve-week session guided by a mental health professional concluded. Aside from improved group dynamics and narratively processing their own stories, Garlock (2016) also noted a benefit from the act of sewing itself that makes this medium particularly helpful with patients experiencing trauma. She wrote:

There is repetition in the creative process of making a story cloth, whether it's cutting material, sewing fabric pieces, or crocheting a border. Along with repetition, sewing uses two hands simultaneously, adding an element of bilateral stimulation, used by many therapists when working with trauma survivors (Garlock, 2016, p. 60).

The literature illustrates how textile arts also work well when Western art materials are unavailable or unfamiliar with an international population. Cohen (2013) the founder of the Common Threads program also highlighted these benefits. However, she described and evaluated the early successes of the program using a neuroscience perspective. Because of the severe nature of the traumas of war, rape, violence, and death experienced by these women traditional talk therapy would not have been possible as such events are often coded nonverbally. Some things are unspeakable, but with the tool of being able to share an image of a loss or event,

the women opened up. Self-esteem, self-expression, capacity and stress reduction were all benefits of this pilot program - similar benefits to what Garlock (2016) wrote about in the future expansion of her project.

The use of stitching arts with refugee populations and survivors of war is not a new practice. Canda (1990) discussed the usefulness of using traditional Hmong quilting and needlework with Southeast Asian refugees living in the United States after the Vietnam War. While he focused on writing and drawing as therapeutic models, he also discussed how these textile arts can be more effective when combating the various difficulties refugees face, including anxiety, post-traumatic stress, cultural transition, and limited English language abilities. He stated, "The advantage of using traditional craft media is that the techniques of expression and familiar and socially supported within the traditional cultural context" (p. 52). Canda (1990) also explained how Hmong needlework is particularly appropriate for trauma survivors because it is a narrative art form. For example, one refugee used quilting to depict a soldier burning down a house (Canda, 1990, p. 52). Baker (2006) also described the use of stitching arts with refugee population, who because of language or cultural barriers may not respond to traditional talk therapy. While she discussed using drawing and painting with male refugees from Bosnia, she also highlighted a "Grandma Group" in the Bosnian Mental Health Program through the Chicago Health Outreach. This group participated in embroidery, needlepoint, crochet, knitting, needle-lace, and quilting over a five-year period of meeting once a week. After over a year of working on individual projects, the women decided to collectively create a story quilt to honor their lost love ones and lost country. While initial benefits of the group included increased socializing and a return of other skills previously lost to trauma, such as cooking and gardening, later members of the group started processing their individual

traumatic experiences. For example, Baker (2006) writes: "After a year and a half, one client talked about her nineteen-year-old son who was missing since the early part of the war" (p. 193). This sharing impulse and the creation of the quilt created important opportunities for understanding and memorializing their transition from victims to survivors. These earlier studies also helped to show how effective stitching arts can be when working with survivors of war and refugees, especially when drawing upon familiar skills or using methods that can help individuals share and process their own stories.

Textile arts and working with older adults.

The literature revealed another population with a small but significant body of research, the use of textile arts while working with older adults. Bookbinder (2016) examined three instances where fusible quilting was used at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Center. When members of the center's veterans group and palliative care unit participated in fusible quilting workshops they found meaning through increases in self-expression, the ability to bond with a group, and legacy leaving. The use of fusible quilting was specifically important because it is an art form that requires no sewing and therefore participants didn't need prior experience in textile making. Bookbinder (2016) wrote, "Fusible quilting also facilitates communication by providing a rich and textured medium to work with. It allows free expression with ease in creating color, patterns, texture, or layers to convey an emotional message" (p. 89). Bookbinder (2016) also looked at how fusible quilting worked with another population at the center – the therapeutic staff. Staff members reported similar feelings of social support and enjoyment in self-expression. This was one of the few studies where the staff participated in a textile making project as their own separate group. It would be interesting if Bookbinder's (2016) study had examined how this

affected their patient care. This was also one of the few studies that included men participating in textile arts within the body of research. This could be, in part, due to the use of a fusible quilting requiring no previous experience working with textiles and limited instruction.

Another article by Moxley, Feen-Calligan, Washington & Garriott (2011) focused on two smaller self-efficacy workshops centered around the creation of group quilts to personify the individual and collective experience of transitioning out of homelessness. In contrast to the previous study, participants received sewing instruction to complete these quilts where each woman created a patch that would be sewn together. Again, as seen in many of these articles, one of the primary benefits of using textile arts is the community gained. The authors specifically noted the supportiveness of the group and ability to gain understanding as key benefits observed during the study. The art of quilting brought the women together into a common space with a common goal. This level of connection lead to positive role modeling, support in undertaking complex projects, and maybe most important a feeling of the experience of homelessness being understood. And while data from the expansion of these groups into serving 530 people over ten years was not provided in the article, it was implied that these positive effects seen the initial groups were replicated. While the study does provide a clear narrative of benefit, it doesn't engage with the participants' racial identity as much as gender identity. Still, like the previous article, Moxley (2011) and his colleagues praised the use of textile arts with older populations, especially in a time of transition.

McGinnis (2014) also focused on the benefits of quilting in art therapy groups with older women in her master's thesis at Hofstra University. In this pilot study, she led a quilting art therapy group for women between the ages of 70-100, most of whom had early stage dementia. Participants were encouraged to create individual patches based on preselected themes. The

study lasted five weeks and culminated in a group art show, where their patches had been combined to create a group quilt. While pre and post tests showed no significant improvement in overall quality of life, participants noted an improvement in social relationships and sensory perception. McGinnis (2014) anecdotally noted the group's efficacy in improving social relationships, stating:

One time, a discussion about Mary Ann's boat led to Julia sharing about seeing movie stars on boats when she lived by the shore. Another time, the group listened intently while Celina share[d] about finding a jump rope amongst three presents on Three Kings Day when she was a young girl. (McGinnis, 2014, p. 53)

This demonstrated the link between the creation of a patch and social sharing, and highlighted the importance of the group setting.

Within all three articles, a clear narrative became visible around the effectiveness of grouping individuals already connected via commonalities into textile arts groups. In Bookbinder's (2016) examination, this meant bringing together patients from the palliative care unit in one group and former veterans in another. In Moxley, Feen-Calligan, Olivia, Washington, & Garriott (2011) study, members were grouped by age, race, and a common experience of transitioning out of homelessness. These similarities added to subjects' feelings of social support and acceptance. Similarly, these similarities may have contributed to subjects' willingness to engage in self-expression, especially around emotionally vulnerable subjects. While participants in McGinnis's (2014) study also shared many demographic similarities -- age, gender, location, and diagnosis -- the quilting did not directly engage with those similarities, such as creating patches to symbolize life in the nursing facility or feelings related to dementia. However, as with

the previous two studies, patients found increased feelings of group belonging and social relationships. All three studies examined patients facing different life challenges while aging, but the outcomes for prolonged and guided group work using textile arts -- specifically quilting -- were similarly based in feelings of belonging and understanding.

Contrasting the group work emphasized in these three articles, were two case studies exploring the use of knitting with single Alzheimer patients. Duchaine, Ladouceur, and Tremblay (1991) describe one-on-one knitting and basket weaving activities that lead to a reduction of fear and visible distress for a 69-year-old woman with dementia. The patient previously woke up uncontrollably crying, but after the 21-day program her crying decreased by fifty to seventy-five percent. The other case study, by Adam, Van der Linden, Juillerat, and Salmon (2000) observed a decline in depressed mood of a 70-year-old Alzheimer patient after reintroducing her to knitting in a three-month intervention. Also observed were a significant decrease in apathy, increased autonomy while completing knitting tasks, and a lessening of the caretaking burden reported by the patient's husband. Both case studies require larger studies and replication, but point to individual stitching arts programs being effective, as well as the more popular group setting.

Craft-focused Research

The literature reveals a limited amount of research on the use of stitching arts in art therapy. One reason for this is that stitching arts does not fall neatly into the category of "art therapy" scholarship. In some articles cases studies were referred to as art therapy and have been published in art therapy journals. In other cases, the textile arts were placed into the realm of occupational therapy. This was likely due to the dual nature of textile as craft and art object and

the division of the two worlds of craft and art in the Western perspective. If textile making is a “craft” and not an “art”, it holds a unique and precarious position within art therapy. Another potential reason for its division may be the use of image making stitching arts and those that are non-image based works (Kapitan, 2011).

The relevance of stitching arts in art therapy.

Amongst the research presented, there appeared to be two minds on the importance of image based work. Govender (2017) included no discussion of image-based weaving. This article explored some of the challenges and adaptations present in the time of new motherhood and recommends weaving as a potential additive tool in therapeutic use with new mothers. Aspects of balance, focus, and mindfulness of the craft are underlined, “It is also tactile, an activity where one’s fingers manipulate and constantly connect with the materials” (Govender, 2017, p.11). In other articles, the importance of the visual image carried weight, as it does often in the field of art therapy. Segalo (2011) found using images essential to the work, “The use of the visual image has been reported by many as a useful tool to tell people’s stories of oppression, liberation and survival. Visual images can be used purposefully to mediate reality in a ‘performative’ way, and furthermore, they allow for collective emotional response” (Segalo, 2011, p.3).

Other articles, such as Heard’s (2009) case study, examined the use of imagery in therapeutic settings, although not directed by or processed with a therapist. Heard (2009) described the spontaneous use of embroidery by a schizophrenic woman in the late 1940s and early 1950s, a different approach to examining stitching and art therapy is taken. It tells the history and observes the remaining artifacts created by one patient in an institutionalized setting.

Without prompting or instruction, the patient, given the pseudonym Myrllen, shredded rags, asked staff for sewing needles, and created several garments embroidered with symbolic imagery and text. While much of the imagery seems to have been copied from advertising, the embroidered words mirror the verbal speech patterns typical among schizophrenia patients. The author also hypothesized that this embroidery may have been a way for the patient to maintain individuality in a clinical setting. While these garments were considered purposeless at the time, Heard (2009) argued they should be viewed through both a clinical and artistic lens. In particular, the author believed that artwork created by the mentally ill is often ignored or othered by the art community. She wrote:

Works of art by the mentally ill are disconnected from the canon of art history in the sense that, while they inspired early 20th century avant-garde artists, the flow of information was not reciprocal and the patients were likely unaware of the theoretical issues and debates driving avant-garde production. However, works by the mentally ill artists respond to the same external stimuli as their contemporaries outside of the institution's walls. (Heard, 2009, p. 28)

Artwork created by individuals with mental illness and their motivations is important to study, especially when these instances predated the codification and widespread use of art therapy. While the author seems to insert her own experience as an artist and viewer into the article, there is still more to learn from Myrllen's history about the effects of needlework and patients with schizophrenia and other mental illnesses.

While academic examinations of stitching arts often fall under the purview of subjects outside of art therapy, the literature held examples of the therapeutic benefits of using textile creation and decoration in both directed and non-directed settings.

The use of textile arts in occupational therapy.

A multiple authored study by Riley, Corkhill, and Morris (2013) was the largest in scale with 3,514 valid responses collected answered an online survey connecting knitting to overall well-being and social well-being. Key findings from the survey included that most members of the group, especially frequent knitters, saw improvements in calmness, happiness, and stress relief. The survey also rated how knitters felt the color and texture of the yarn affected changes in mood (24% felt color of yarn affected mood and 46% felt texture of yarn) did. The survey measured how knitting with a group was different from knitting at home, with 90% of people who knitted with a group reporting that they'd made friends through knitting and the majority saying knitting with others gave them feelings of confidence, belonging, and connection. The survey also showed that overall, in this community most individuals gained mathematical skills, coping skills, and social skills through participating in knitting. Although worldwide in scope, most of the participants of the study were from the UK and USA and 90% were white. Smaller studies also explored textile arts and occupational therapy, such as Dickie (2010) who explored the therapeutic benefits of self-directed quilt making in North Carolina, examining the difference between every day quilters and individuals who take up quilting in response to a personal tragedy. Additionally, Riley (2011) used ethnographic tools to examine British textile workers -- weavers, spinners, and dyers -- who are motivated professionally to create. In this study, she found that the act of working with textiles lead to increased sense of self and a potential decrease in negative health outcomes. While these articles were written for an occupational therapist audience, there is a plethora of information in these sources that can be applied to an art therapy context.

Textile arts in relation to sociology.

Aside from art therapy literature and occupational therapy literature, sociological articles which discuss the mental health of the studied population in relation to their textile practices were also reviewed. The Sarna and Shukla (1994) study was done on the physical health and neuroticism of 200 women in India engaged in home-based production of Chikan embroidery. The authors found that these women had higher rates of neuroticism, which stands out amongst all of the literature touting the benefits of textile making. However, when you consider other sociological factors such as socioeconomic status, or the far increased amount of hours spent on embroidery, the information is hard to relate directly to the other ways of textile making that are not professional in nature. The articles and dissertations included, all touch on mental health components, but many similar studies were excluded because they lacked information in this area. Ortiz (2008) bemoaned this absence from her area of focus, basket weaving, "The creative and emotional satisfaction that basket makers derive from the gathering and processing of weaving materials, and the weaving itself, is likewise absent from the literature" (Ortiz, 2008, p. 11). She goes on to discuss tears in the eyes of the Californian weavers when talking about the sense of connection that their weaving provides for them to their history, ancestors, and the natural world.

Sociology, Anthropology, and Women's Studies are disciplines that are of course also linked. Kelly's (2013) work was an example of an article published in Women's Studies International Forum, and written by a professor of sociology. This article provided insight through ethnographic research on stitch and bitch communities and online textile groups that have an activist orientation. Other times the merging fields are sociology and psychology such as the Fields (2014) article on the changing meanings and functions of knitting, published in Social

Psychology Quarterly, and written by a professor of sociology. The interdisciplinary nature of these articles is of interest and points to the richness of collaboration when two specialties are combined.

The place for textile creation in the artistic cannon.

Of course, the majority of literature written about textiles is in the arts. There are books describing the history of the stitching arts, such as Gordon's 2011 book. The majority of artistic books in this area are instructional in nature. Some provide additional information, such as Maynes' (2017) book which features interviews with different craftspeople, including a patchwork quilt artist. Most simply, these books provide knowledge of the 'how-to's' of stitching arts, where to buy material, etc. There is also, of course, literature evaluating pieces within the textile arts through a purely artistic criteria. Both types of sources can serve as powerful inspiration for art therapists hoping to use stitching and weaving professionally, but offer little information relating the efficacy of the practice within the field.

Conclusion

Overall, there are significant links between feminism and stitching arts, but the intention of the artist is the most important indicator of its feminist qualities. Rebellion against oppressive, patriarchal systems is sometimes a goal of the artist and even part of their identity. Others find quilting, knitting, and other stitching arts fit within their most conservative ideas of a woman's acceptable interest. Similarly, culturally relevant forms of textile art can be the most beneficial for certain communities especially when focused on narratively expressive art forms, while others benefit more from the self-esteem gained from mastering a new skills and methods of

stitching arts. The power of groups, particularly women's groups, working with textiles was found to be a particular strength in treatment. Although the few studies focused on individual stitching work calls for further study and evaluation. There may be a completely different, though equally valid, set of benefits that arise from one-on-one therapeutic work that is currently unknown. And while the evidence points to strong feminist and female empowerment themes within the current body of literature, with further study men, gender non-conforming individuals, and mixed gender applications of textile work could also point to significant findings.

Textile arts encompass a great number of crafts and art forms. At times, the literature examined highlighted the restorative, restful, and meditative elements of working with fabric and yarn. Other times, the literature spotlighted stitching arts as enlivening and soul-fulfilling. This chameleon-like quality is what makes working with textiles so varied and applicable to a number of different areas of study and treatment. This is why it will be important moving forward to study the use of textiles and stitching arts using a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach as well as increasing the body of literature supporting the use of these materials and practices in an art therapy context.

Research Approach

A qualitative approach is taken with this research in the form of a survey and a focus group involving a group interview and an artmaking component. This qualitative approach is appropriate for the scale of the study and is a personal fit for the researcher. Beginning with a survey helps to reach a larger number of people quickly and inexpensively. The survey asked basic information about whether or not the art therapists use textiles in their work or personal lives, and what that might look like for them. The focus group included informal discussion of personal textile making practices, a semi-structured group interview, and an artmaking component to aid in the reflection of the use of textiles. Creswell (2014) describes qualitative interviews in focus group settings as having six to eight interviewees in each group. Creswell (2014) continues that, "These interviews involve unstructured and generally open ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants." (p.190) This method is an effective way of exploring material that can be elusive to talk about, such as the power of textile making. Creswell (2014) additionally speaks to the researcher maintaining focus on the meaning that participants hold about a subject, and to the emergent nature of the process of qualitative research, both of which are important to the process of this form of research.

Titus and Sinacore (2013) conducted a study that utilized focus groups, along with journals and interviews, to examine the relationship between artmaking and the well-being of young women. They asked questions about participant's experience of art-making, and they asked about participants' thoughts, feelings, and ideas. The questions that prompted the focus group conversation arose from themes of the survey. They will be similar in nature to those used

above, as the intention to examine the relationship between artmaking with textile and art therapists is similar to the research question of Titus and Sinacore (2013).

Kapitan (2010) writes that one of the purposes of art-based research is “to provoke, challenge, and illuminate knowledge rather than to confirm or consolidate it” (p.214). I believe if you asked people about how they feel when they create with textiles without them experiencing this in the interview context, the answer could be pre-prepared and farther from the actual experience of making. The artwork was a helpful source of dialogue for the focus group. The audiotape from the focus group and the artwork were then analyzed for unique information as well as examining larger themes and commonalities.

Methods

Definition of Terms

Textile arts: Collier (2011) defines textile arts as working with fibers, coming from plants, animals, or created synthetically (p.17). Collier (2011) includes discussion of many textile art techniques in her book such as felting, spinning, basketry, weaving, knitting, crocheting, sewing, kumihimo, braiding, macramé embroidery, needlepoint, cross-stitch, dyeing, beadwork, quilting, and textile surface design, paper-making, and rug hooking.

Felting: “Felt is a non-woven process where the fibers are locked together in a process utilizing heat, moisture, and pressure to form a compact material” (Collier, 2011, p. 24).

Knitting: Collier (2011) defines knitting as “making a fabric or garment by intertwining yarn or thread in a series of connected loops” (p. 24).

Knotting: “Knots are a method of fastening or securing linear material such as rope by tying or interweaving” (Collier, 2011, p. 26).

Lacework “Lace is a delicate fabric made of yarn or thread in a web-like pattern. It is typically lightweight and has an open-hole pattern” (Collier, 2011, p. 26).

Embroidery: “Embroidery is decorative needlework that is usually made on loosely woven cloth or canvas; it is frequently a picture or a pattern” (Collier, 2011, p. 26).

Needlepoint: “Needlepoint refers to uniformly spaced patterned embroidery on canvas.” (Collier, 2011, p. 26).

Quilting: “Quilting refers to the process of stitching through two layers of fabric, sandwiched between a filling of wool, feathers, or down” (Collier, 2011, p. 28).

Spinning: “Hand-spinning is the art of twisting fiber into a continuous thread by hand, using a drop spindly, or with a spinning wheel” (Collier, 2011, p. 30).

Weaving: “Weaving is a process of making cloth by interlacing fibers on a loom. Looms intertwine both across (weft) and lengthwise (warp)” (Collier, 2011, p. 31).

Dyeing: Collier defines dyeing textiles as “color producing agents are applied to fibers in order to impart a degree of color permanence” (Collier, 2011, p. 23).

Design of Study

This research studies the experiences and perceptions of art therapists regarding textile arts. This information was obtained first through a survey, and then through a workshop with those who responded that they were available to meet at Loyola Marymount University campus on a weekend day. Participants were contacted via email to complete survey. They were asked to answer questions, and the final question of the survey asked about their availability for the focus group. Identifying questions in the survey will ask about the art therapist's age, gender identity, licensure, and if they are currently practicing in the mental health field. The survey goes on to ask about personal artmaking experience with textiles: what techniques are used, the frequency of use, and perceived benefits and challenges. Then the survey will ask about usage of textiles in art therapy practice, again gathering information about techniques, frequency, and perceived benefits and challenges. The focus group began with an informal conversation about personal textile artmaking. This was followed by an artmaking engagement working with textile materials. The focus group was semi-structured with questions that emerged from information gathered in the survey. There was an audiotape of the focus group that was analyzed along with visual data gathered. This information was first organized and read through, before looking for themes and important descriptions relevant to the research question.

Sampling.

The survey was sent out via e-mail to graduates from the Marital and Family Therapy program at Loyola Marymount University. This is a convenient way to access many art therapists who may be inclined to respond to a fellow Loyola Marymount University student. Several hundred potential participants were contacted to take part in a Qualtrics survey. Those who engaged with the survey and participate in textile making personally, or who utilize textiles

in their work in the mental health field, were invited to a workshop held at Loyola Marymount University. This process of selecting participants generated participants who have personal and clinical experience with textile art making and were willing to reflect on their relationship to textiles.

Gathering of data.

Data was gathered from three sources: the survey, the art created within the focus group, and the focus group audiotape. The survey data was received electronically via the program Qualtrics. The final question of the survey was “Are you willing to attend a focus group at Loyola Marymount University on this subject?” Themes and questions that emerged from the survey were the jumping off point for the focus group. The focus group began with conversation around personal practice. The participants’ textile art products were photographed. The focus group was audiotaped and transcribed. Participants were encouraged to discuss the process and attached meaning to creating textiles. They were then asked to reflect on the role of textiles in the field of art therapy, as well as practically in clinical work.

Analysis of data.

The data gathered from the survey responses was analyzed with the aid of the computer program Qualtrics. The focus group was audiotaped and transcribed in order to discover emergent themes and learn about the common and individual experiences. The art is visual data and the researcher looked for commonalities and differences between the pieces, as well as being interested in the conversation about the product and process. The art, survey information, and focus group transcription make up the data that were analyzed in a search for emergent themes

and points of focus. This data is presented in written form, with the addition of photographic images.

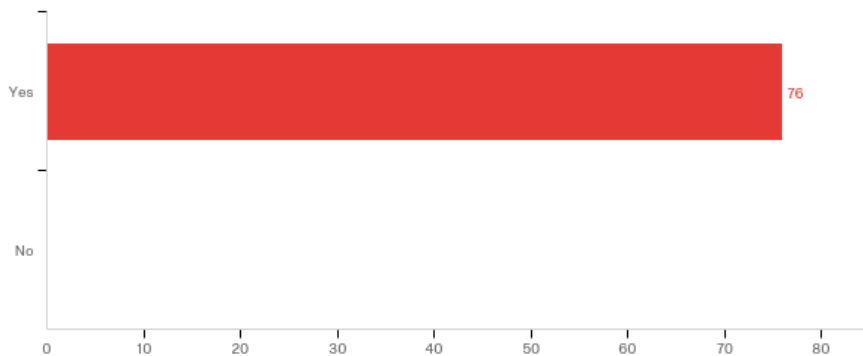
Results

Presentation of Data

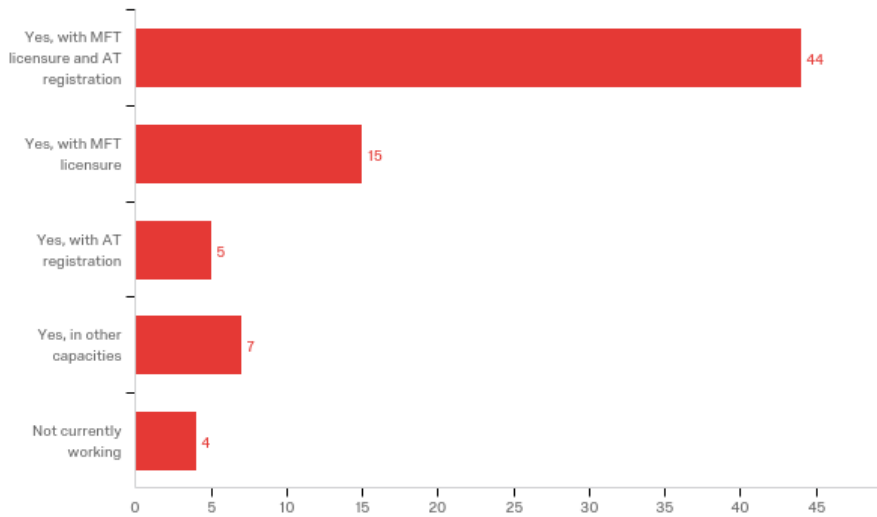
Three sets of data were collected and reviewed for this research project: a Qualtrics survey, focus group transcription and notes, and photographs of art research data. Survey responses that were collected through Qualtrics are presented first, as this was the first step in the process of collecting research data. Following the presentation of the survey data, the information from the focus group is presented, followed by the response art images.

Data Set 1: Surveys. 76 surveys were started, and 72 surveys completed. The partially completed surveys gave relevant answers to questions asked, so they were included in the survey analysis. Included below is each survey question with responses, presented in graphic form and as a table of information.

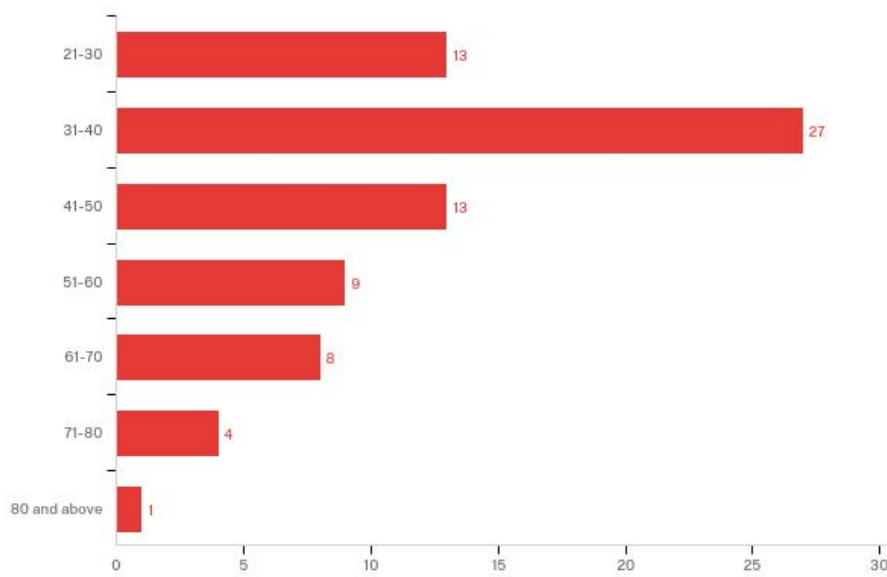
Question 1 - Have you worked in the mental health field since graduating from LMU?



76 participants (100%) responded “Yes” to this question. 0 participants responded “No.”

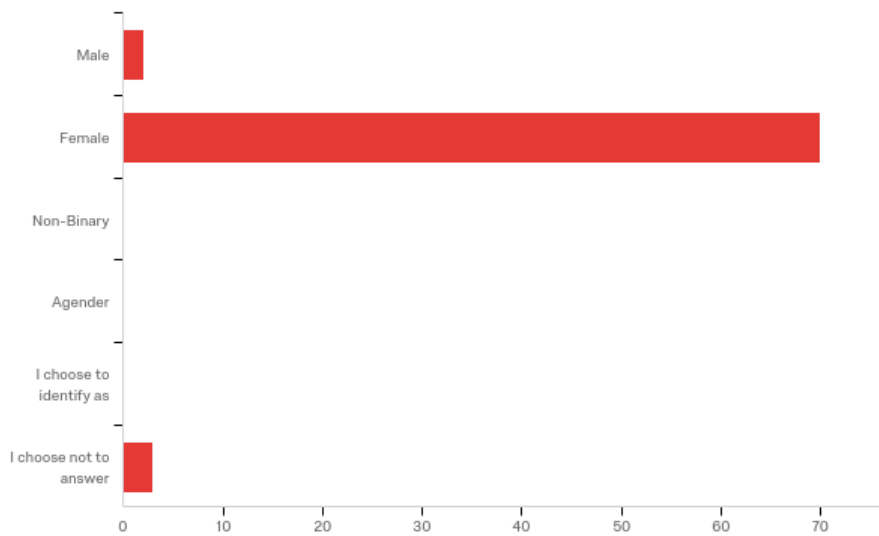
Question 2 - Are you currently working in the mental health field?

44 participants (58.7%) responded “Yes, with MFT licensure and AT registration.” 15 participants (20%) responded “Yes, with MFT licensure.” 7 participants (9.3%) responded “Yes, in other capacities.” 5 participants (6.7%) responded “Yes, with AT registration” 4 participants (5.3%) responded “Not currently working.”

Question 3 - What is your age?

27 participants (36%) responded "31-40." 13 participants (17.3%) responded "21-30," also 13 participants (17.3%) responded "41-50." 9 participants (12%) responded "51-60." 8 participants (10.7%) responded "61-70." 4 (5.3%) participants responded "71-80" and 1 participant (1.3%) responded "80 and above."

Question 4 - With which gender do you most identify?



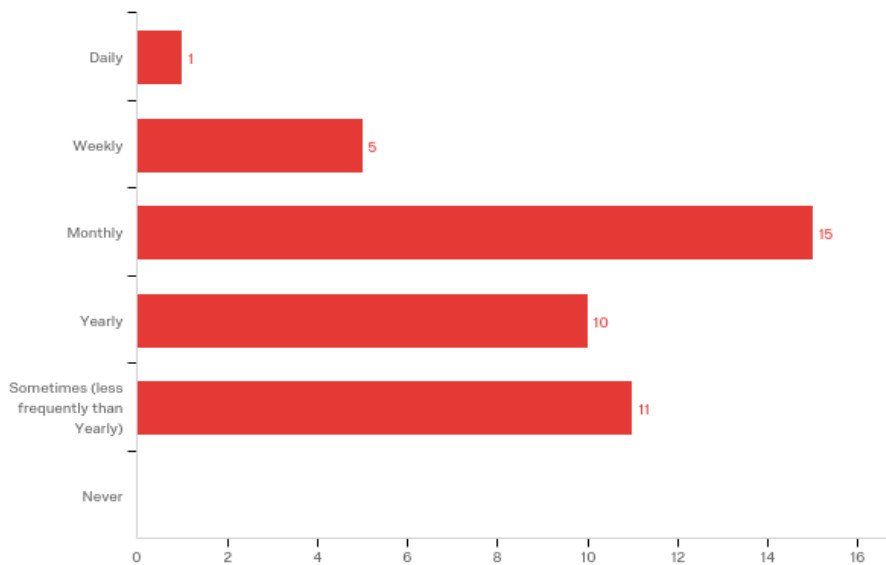
70 participants (93.3%) responded "Female." 3 participants (4%) responded "I choose not to answer." 2 participants (2.7%) responded "Male".

Question 5 - Do you use textiles as a material choice? Please select all that apply.



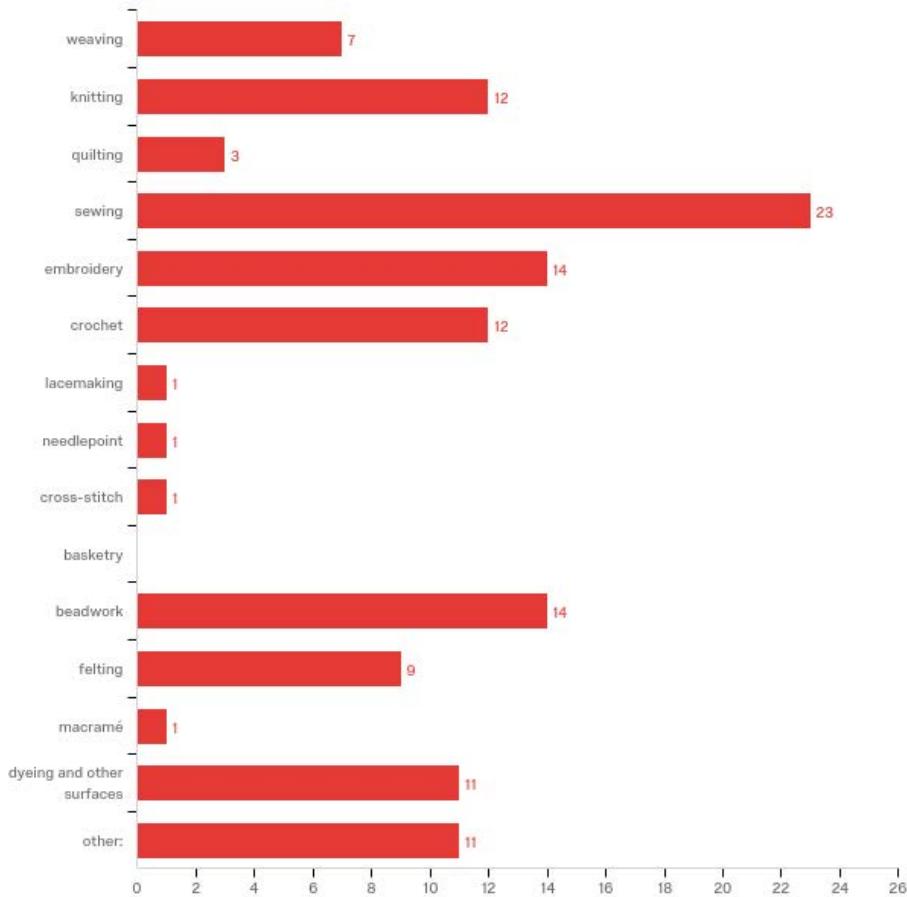
42 participants selected “In my personal artmaking.” 37 participants selected “In my clinical work.” 19 participants selected “Never.” More than one selection was available for this question, hence the omission of percentages.

Question 6 - How frequently do you use textiles as a material choice in your personal artmaking practice?



15 participants (35.7%) selected “Monthly.” 11 participants (26.2%) selected “Sometimes (less frequently than Yearly).” 10 (23.8%) participants selected “Yearly.” 5 participants (11.9%) selected “Weekly.” 1 participant (2.4%) selected “Daily.”

Question 7 - What types of textile making do you personally engage in? Please select all that apply.

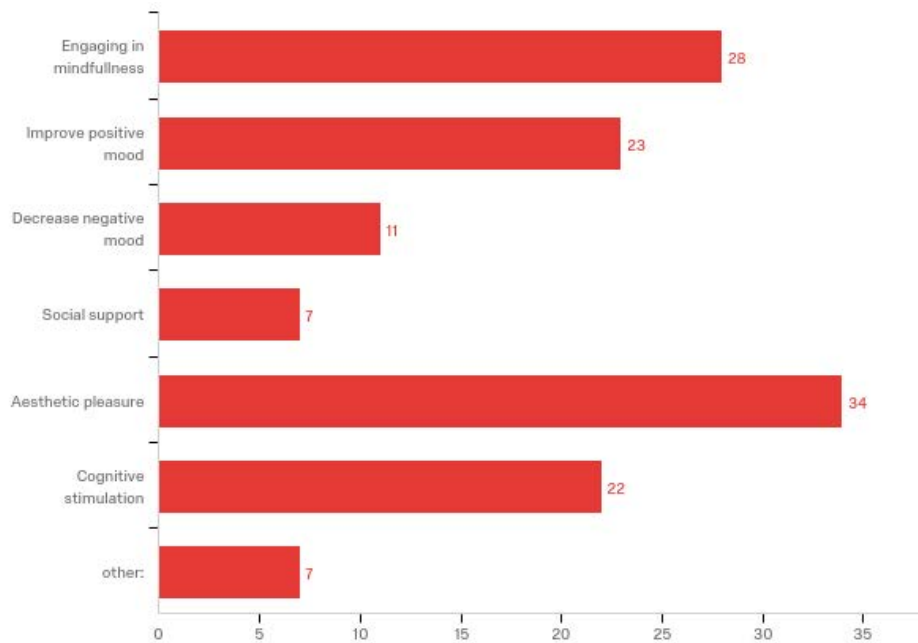


23 participants selected “sewing,” 14 participants selected “embroidery,” 14 participants selected “beadwork,” 12 participants selected “knitting,” 12 participants selected “crochet,” 11 participants selected “dyeing and other surfaces,” 11 participants selected “other,” 9 participants selected “felting,” 7 participants selected “weaving,” 3 participants selected “quilting,” 1 participant selected “lacemaking,” 1 participant selected “needlepoint,” 1 participant selected “cross-stitch,” 1 participant selected “macramé.” More than one choice could be selected therefore percentages are not included.

Other text submissions:

- Using fabrics for collage work
- Shibori stitching
- Rug hooking
- punchneedle
- plaster casting
- Mixed Media projects, collage; mixed media art
- In collage; fabric used in mixed media projects
- costume making
- collage

Question 8 - What are your perceived benefits of working with textiles personally? Select all that apply, and/or write your own response.

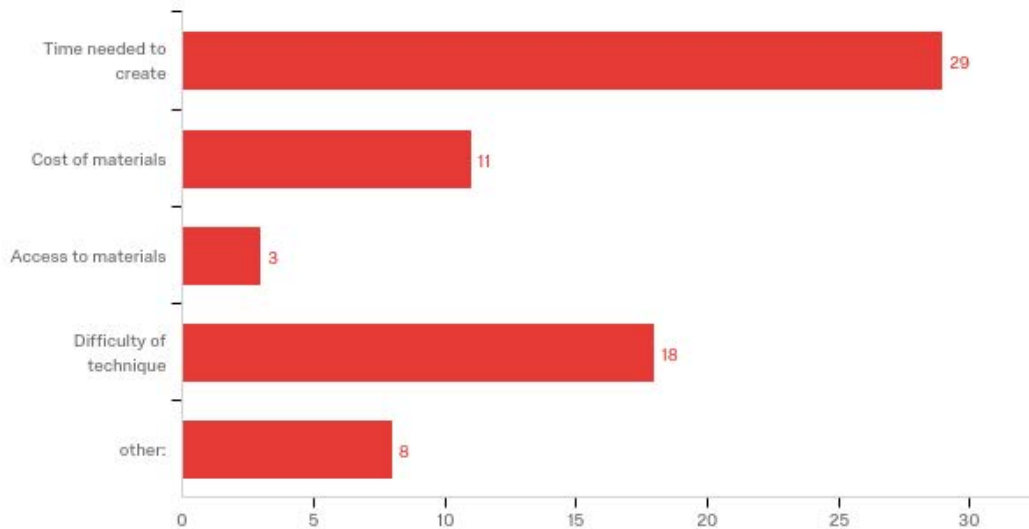


34 participants selected “Aesthetic pleasure”, 28 participants selected “Engaging in mindfulness”, 23 participants selected “Improve positive mood”, 22 participants selected “Cognitive stimulation”, 11 participants selected “Decrease negative mood”, 7 participants selected “Social support”, 7 participants also submitted their own answers under “other”. More than one choice could be selected therefore percentages are not included.

“Other” text submissions:

- Emotion regulation
- Accomplishing a task
- Relaxation, Enjoyable social activity
- Positive self image
- Personalized gifts
- Tactile engagement
- Decrease anxiety

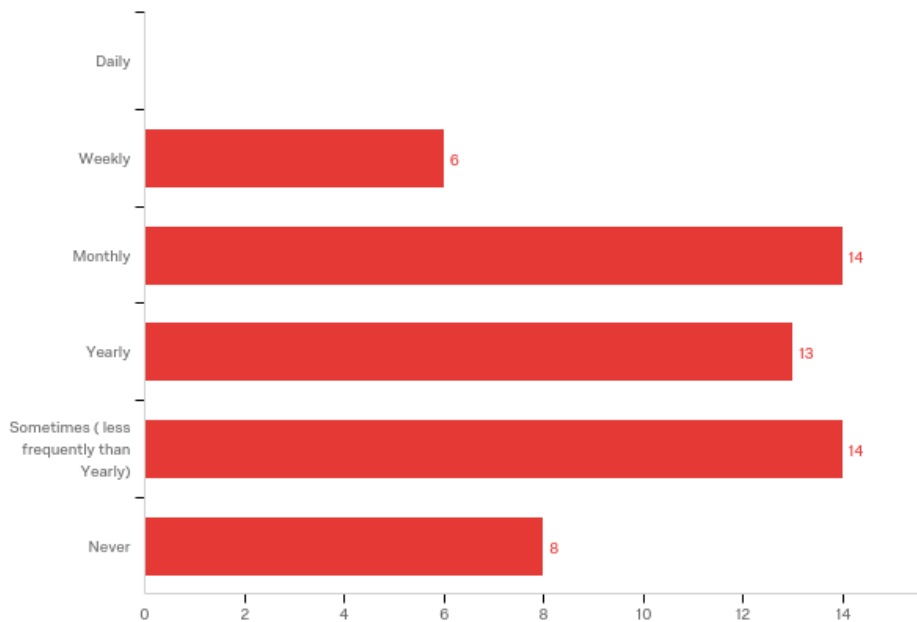
Question 9 - Perceived challenges when working with textiles personally? Select all that apply, and/or write your own response.



29 participants selected “Time needed to create”, 18 participants selected “Difficulty of technique”, 11 participants selected “Cost of materials”, 8 participants submitted their own answers under “other”, and 3 participants selected “Access to materials”. More than one choice could be selected therefore percentages are not included.

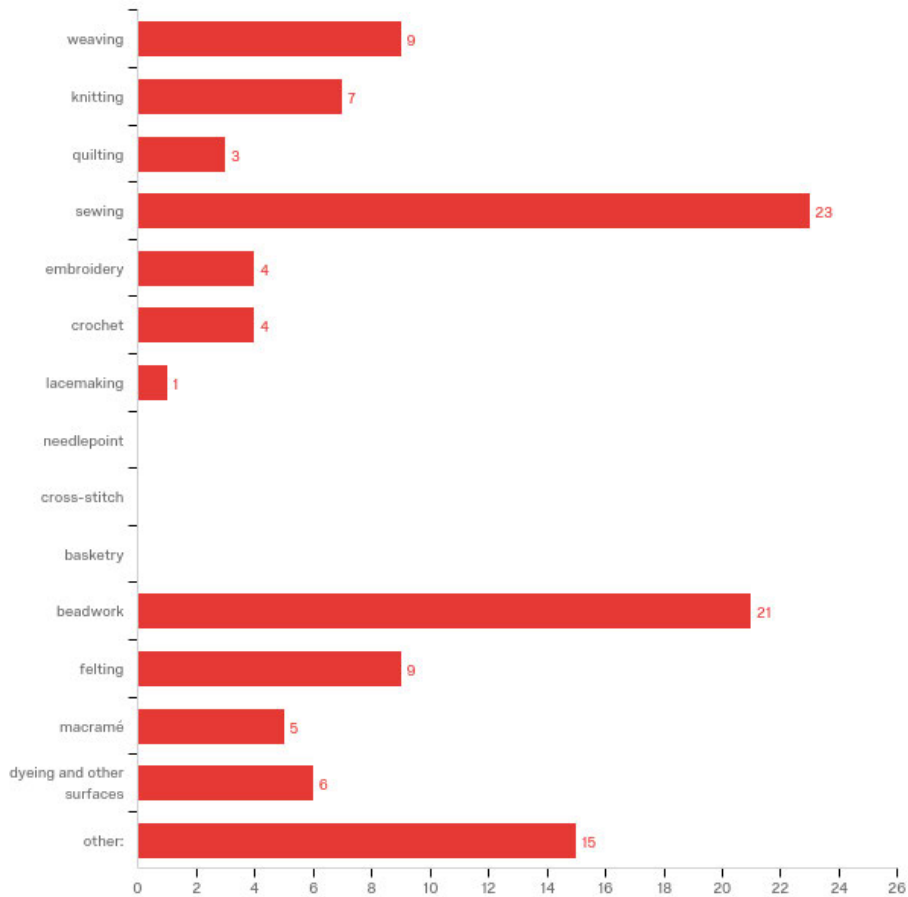
“Other” text submissions:

- Need time to learn techniques.
- Appropriate work space
- frustrations with sewing machine
- I don't know how to sew yet!
- when the use enhances my art work
- space requirements
- sorting through materials that are not inspiring

Question 10 - How frequently do you use textile arts in your clinical work?

14 participants selected “Monthly”, 14 participants selected “Sometimes (less frequently than Yearly)”, 13 participants selected “Yearly”, 8 participants selected “Never”, 6 participants selected “Weekly”, and 0 participants selected “Daily”.

Question 11 - Which types of textile making have you used in your clinical work? Please select all that apply.



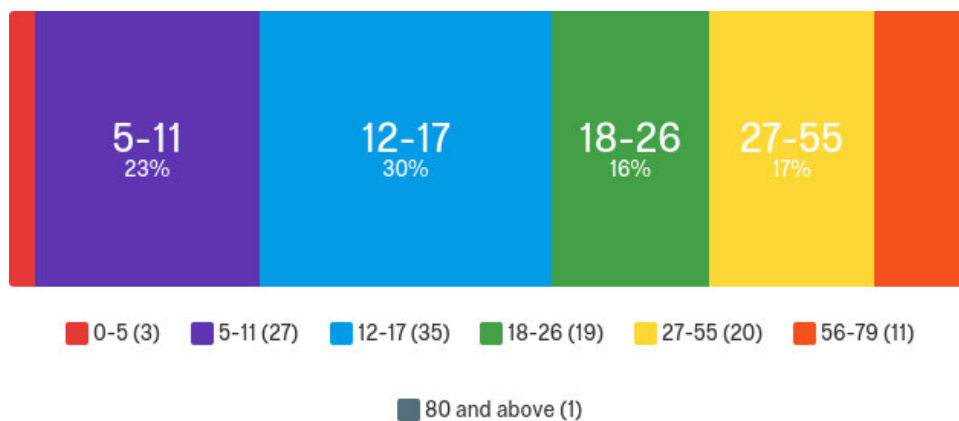
23 participants selected “sewing,” 21 participants selected “beadwork,” 15 participants selected “other,” 9 participants selected “weaving,” 9 participants selected “felting,” 7 participants selected “knitting,” 6 participants selected “dyeing and other surfaces,” 5 participants selected “macramé,” 4 participants selected “embroidery,” 4 participants selected “crochet,” and 3 participants selected “quilting.”

“Other” text submissions:

- Sensory stimulation, play-exploration of materials
- Fabric incorporated as a material

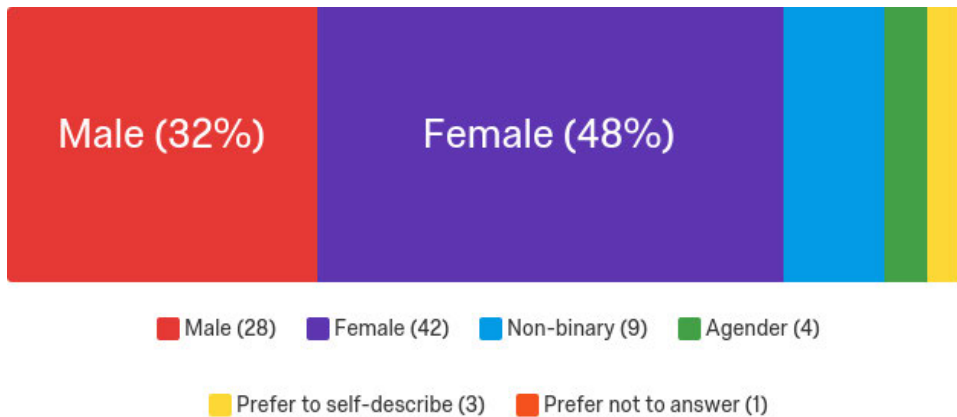
- I brought in swatches and they selected self-symbols
- Collages; Collage
- mixed media art/sculptures
- using textiles as collage material
- I have materials/tools for many of the above and follow clients' choices for using those
- doll making and prayer flags
- I am retired but when I was working used textiles in making prayer flags, and altars at dia de los muertos, and making monkey dolls for gifts
- assemblage
- collaging with fabric swatches. Also provide felt for various projects
- collage with textile materials
- Have offered textiles as part of found objects for unspecified use but not offered specific technique
- using textiles/fabrics for collage, puppets, etc.

Question 12 - In your clinical work, what age clients have you used textiles with? Select all that apply.



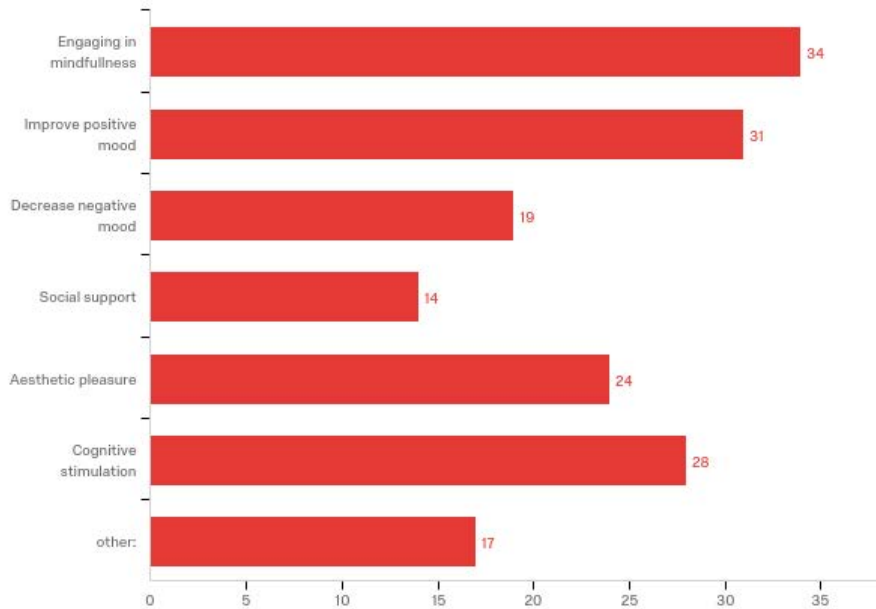
35 participants selected “12-17,” 27 participants selected “5-11,” 20 participants selected “27-55,” 19 participants selected “18-26,” 11 participants selected “56-79,” 3 participants selected “0-5,” and 1 participant selected “80 and above.”

Question 13 - In your clinical work, have you used textiles in treatment with people who identify with the following genders?



42 participants selected “Female,” 28 participants selected “Male,” 9 participants selected “Non-binary,” 4 participants selected “Agender,” 3 participants selected “Prefer to self-describe,” and 1 participant selected “Prefer not to answer.”

Question 14 - What are your perceived benefits of working with textiles in your clinical work? Select all that apply, and/or write your own response.



34 participants selected “Engaging in mindfulness,” 31 participants selected “Improve positive mood,” 28 participants selected “Cognitive stimulation,” 24 participants selected “Aesthetic pleasure,” 19 participants selected “Decrease negative mood,” 17 participants selected “other,” 14 participants selected “Social support.”

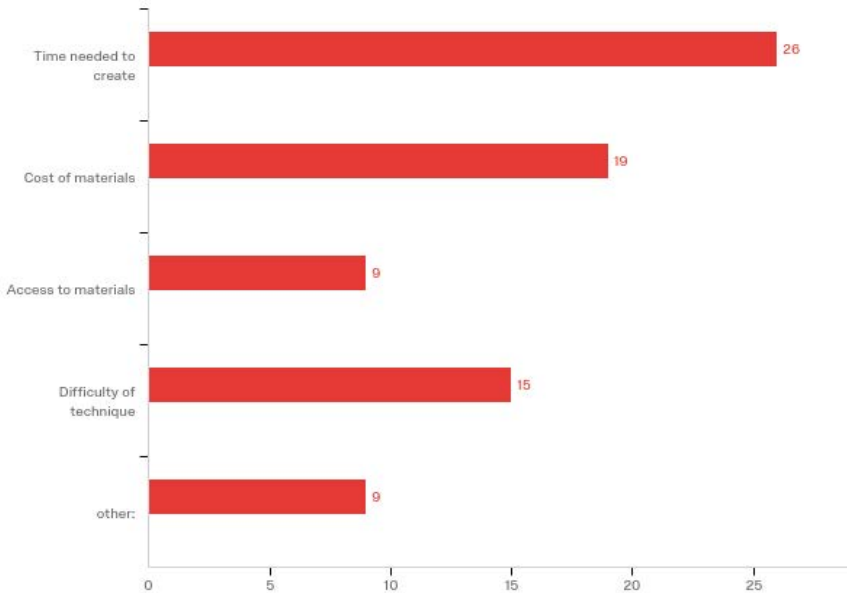
“Other” text submissions:

- Emotional regulation, bilateral brain stimulation
- ground/centering/coping tool, behavioral tool for clients with adhd
- self-efficacy
- improve problem solving skills
- accepting and tolerating imperfection

- helps clients to “slow down” and be patient. It can also be really activating for some people The resulting piece is often soothing for the client to engage with, and helps to reduce anxiety. I have often used them as transitional objects for clients to bring home. Especially if we have created something together
- Binding anxiety, creating something useful (knitting)
- expression of feelings
- self-esteem, skill building
- tactile quality connecting with feelings
- Creative embodiment, identity/narrative explorations
- self esteem
- problem solving, affect regulation
- Decrease anxiety; satisfaction and increased self esteem from completing a project, and seeing the results
- problem solving; tactile experience of softness, creating comforting objects
- self-regulation

Question 15 - Perceived challenges when working with textiles in a mental health setting?

Select all that apply and/or write your own response.



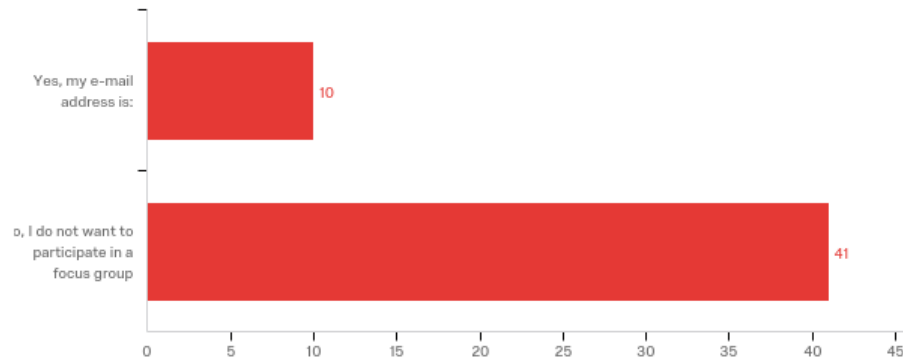
26 participants selected “Time needed to create”, 19 participants selected “Cost of materials”, 15 participants selected “Difficulty of technique”, 9 participants selected “Access to materials”, and 9 participants submitted their own responses under “other”.

“Other” text submissions:

- work space
- lack of patience
- Possible safety concerns with needles
- Limited fine motor skills
- Often, it takes time to teach a technique, so it can take away from client’s time creating him/herself when the activity is first introduced
- as a volunteer, lugging portable sewing machine for monkey doll projects, I paid for all materials myself.

- Does not consider an intervention for billing in DMH world.

Question 16 - May I contact you about the focus group via e-mail?



41 participants (80.4%) selected “No, I do not want to participate in a focus group.” 10 participants (19.6%) selected “Yes, my e-mail address is.”

Question 17 - Is there anything you would like to add on this topic?



“Yes” text submissions:

- Having textiles available offers the ability to create items, such as doll clothing and blankets, that are close to the real item. I think this offers a sense of accomplishment as well as a significant opportunity for the client to provide an object that meets basic needs, offers safety and comfort.
- Would like more workshops on using textiles in art therapy

- It is a great topic to explore during school learning, so we can experience how to use this material when we are in the clinical setting. i do not feel educated by this material and do not have not much experience with them myself, only crochet.
- I use a variety of cloth but mostly we glue the cloth rather than sew it.
- It is important to continue women's creative work by hand for many reasons and might consider attending the focus group if I knew what was involved in the activity
- I work at a high school, and I know some girls gravitate towards learning how to crochet, knit, or use beads to make things. I love the idea of having textiles on hand!
- Textile art that is communal is interesting to me as a means of healing and bonding

Second Data Set: Focus Group Summary.

The Art Therapists' Work with Textiles focus group took place on a Sunday morning in the winter. The focus group was led by the researcher, and supervised by the researcher's mentor, a Loyola Marymount University professor. The researcher's mentor additionally participated in the initial conversation of the focus group, and the artmaking, but did not participate in the focus group semi-structured interview. Three Loyola Marymount University alumnae of the Marital and Family Therapy and Art Therapy program attended the focus group. Two of the three members were recent graduates of the program. The focus group lasted for approximately three hours. The time together began with looking through books on textiles that were relevant to the focus group. Then was the signing of informed consent forms, after an explanation of potential risk. In place of formal workshops, each member of the focus group spoke for several minutes about their own relationship to textile making; some members showed examples. Because of the time saved from this change of structure, there was just over seventeen

minutes of informal conversation which preceded the personal textile work discussions. Data from the focus group consisted of two audio recordings and typed transcriptions of these recordings. The first recording is of the informal conversation, along with discussions of personal relationships to textile making. The second is of the semi-structured focus group interview. Additional data from the focus group includes researcher's written notes, and the response art created during the focus group. Participants are each identified by a letter: A, B, C, and D. These identifying letters correspond to participants' response art identifiers as A, B, C, D.

As they looked through textile books, group members discussed where they worked and what their jobs entailed. Participant A mentioned an upcoming Expressive Arts conference, then spoke about a recent piece of textile art that she had made. She spoke of the repetitive nature of the process of making, and the sense of control the project gave her. She said, "It was something I needed to do to soothe myself." There was then a mention of the fabric that Participant A had brought as a donation to the focus group. The group discussed their relationships to hand stitching and using sewing machines, including sewing on paper. Participant A discussed being taught by her grandmother to knit, as well as stating that her work has become "more loose and expressive over the years." Participant D brought up the importance of an art therapist conveying their own passion for the materials and artmaking in the process of therapy, also wondering aloud if textile materials invite "more interaction, in a different way than the traditional materials." The division of art and craft was briefly mentioned, before Participant B brought up the dismissal of traditional artmaking by women, likely because of the gendered nature of the work. Other members echoed her ideas. Participant C told a story illustrating a young man making his business off of quilting t-shirts. She described how irksome it was to her, due to quilting clothing items being something women have done for many years. The discussion

was also broadened to gender inequality in music and the art world, and the gender gap in gallery representation. "It's interesting how men who get into fiber work get a lot of credit, whereas women don't." said Participant C.

Each member had 5-10 minutes to speak about their own work. Participant C shared examples of work she had made using a punch needle tool. Participant D shared an embroidery piece made by a women's group that she had helped facilitate. Participant A shared various images of her work from her cell phone, including weaving, knitting, and collage with felt. Participant B solely described her process and relationship with weaving. During the casual presentations, other members listened with apparent interest, and asked questions of each presenter. Members verbalized their interest in trying different techniques that were described, as well as making affirming comments about each other's work. Participant D described Participant C's work as "beautiful" and "like an emotional welcome mat." Participant B said, "I love that" in reaction to Participant A's work. Participant B and Participant C both described the embroidery shown by Participant D as "beautiful."

Participant B described weaving and knitting as "a coping tool," detailing that counting, breathing, and making mistakes contribute to the mindful nature of these activities. She also brought up needles and embroidery as a potential alternative for clients' self-harming behaviors. The potential benefits of using needles and embroidery was also discussed by two members regarding medical trauma. Participant A was brainstorming interventions, possibly involving a plastic needle, for a blind client of Participant B's. There was then approximately one hour of artmaking. The prompt given was, "to look at the materials and make something," its intention was to be open in nature, to allow for the self-expression of the members, and to invite any type of engagement with the textile materials. Materials available included a wide variety of

yarns, threads, fabrics, and felt. There were also tools for embroidery, cross-stitch, felting, weaving, beading, knitting, crocheting, gluing, cutting, painting, drawing, and a variety of other tools for modifying the textiles.

Immediately following the artmaking portion of the focus group was a semi-structured interview. The first prompt was for participants to describe what their creations and their processes were like, along with any reflections on either. Aside from describing her artwork and its meaning, Participant D did not participate in the semi-structured interview. When gathering together again, two members mentioned that their work was unfinished and would be continued. One member discussed adjusting her plans to fit the short time frame, she indicated the difficult nature of making with textiles in a short period of time. Time was brought up in several more instances throughout the interview, the word time was mentioned 39 times in the transcription. The word art was mentioned more often, 44 times in the transcription, and the importance and value of art ran throughout conversations.

Participant A depicted her work as being “a lot of knotting and embroidering, and trying to just make a bunch of the textures combined.” There were many layers of meaning in the work for this focus group member, including allusions to her maiden name, and the metaphor of her marriage coming through the piece as a whole. Participant A had brought many of her own materials from home, and included ribbon that she had used to tie her wedding invitations. Participant A had earlier stated that she was divorced; her final statement about her work was “So maybe it's me coming to peace with, okay, this is really okay...”. Participant D spoke next about the process of deconstructing in order to construct her piece, continuing to pull out threads as she spoke. The other participants noted the stability of the piece, and the tender nature with which she was holding and manipulating the piece. Participant D spoke of the metaphors in her

piece and “that there's destabilizing and stabilizing concurrently.” Participant D finished by discussing the importance of her hands in her work, that it couldn't be done with a tool.

Participant B spoke next about the red, white, and gold weaving that she created, beginning with how she was taken in by the gold thread. She stated she considered the patience required to wind thread and yarn while working. She said, “I was thinking about how much patience that has created for me and it's like a way of taking care or a metaphor.” Participant C spoke next about how she wanted to incorporate each technique that was discussed previous to the artmaking. She said she thought of the power of the group, art therapists who enjoy working with fibers. “And so I wanted to kind of capture how special it is to be able to have these three hours.” Participant C also brought up metaphor, as did the three previous members. She spoke about weaving as metaphorically “bringing everything together.” Participant C described her work as a landscape, in particular mountains and valleys that were reminiscent of her drive to work, which she described as “relaxing and soothing.”

The following question was about the potential divide between art and craft, and whether textile artmaking is underappreciated within art therapy. Time was brought up by all three participating members as something that sometimes prohibits them from using textile arts in art therapy sessions. Participant A brought up the possibility of starting with small projects and working towards a larger goal after building initial momentum. Participant C mentioned DMH documentation of interventions as another barrier to using textile arts. The other two members remarked about the context of her work setting and the possibility of writing creatively about the sessions. Participant C remarked that her work places an emphasis on a client verbalizing their processing. She stated that the client does not need to do that for their own

healing. Participant A and Participant B agreed, they underscored the importance of the art and the intuitive processes.

Then the researcher asked about gender, and how that played a role in textile making, personally or clinically. The answers emphasized the clinical value of textile making for all people, not only those who identify as female. Participant A described using textiles in a group setting with men and their enjoyment of the process, along with the social stimulation it provided. Participant B discussed using textiles mostly with boys, aged around 7-10 years old. She described the playful nature of the textiles, and how clients have the ability to take on different identities and roles through costume play with textiles. Participant A then discussed one man, from a Latin culture, that she had worked with. He had been shamed for any artistic practices he engaged in. She said, "I think that culture plays a big role" and remarked that Los Angeles may be more open minded than other places. The researcher asked a question about specific populations or diagnoses that would benefit from using textile materials. Two members agreed that clients with ADHD would benefit, and one member brought up trauma, anxiety, and autism additionally. A client's sense of safety with textiles was discussed, how safety can increase if they feel they are in control, such as having a choice of textural materials.

The researcher asked about whether clients already came into session already possessing certain textile skills, to which all three members replied they did not. Participant A asked Participant B about whether or not she sets up a loom before sessions where she has included weaving. She answered that usually she partially sets up before sessions. Participant C then spoke about wanting to incorporate textiles in art therapy since beginning graduate study, and the problematic issue of time. She continued to speak about the therapeutic potential of quilting and knitting groups, based upon social support and interaction. "And the conversations

that happen in those groups I think can be really therapeutic.” There was some confusion, at least with Participant A, over the next question. The researcher asked about the importance, or unimportance, of a representational image in art therapy. All three art therapists agreed that there was therapeutic benefit in artistic creation that was not representational. Some potential benefits from engaging in non-image based activities, such as knitting a scarf, were mentioned: a sense of pride and accomplishment, building frustration tolerance and engaging in mindfulness.

After the next question on social support, the value of groups was again mentioned. Participant A and Participant B discussed their enjoyment of making textiles outside, or in places other than the home. This underscored the often portable nature of working with textiles. The next question of the focus group was to talk about features of textile making that were unique to textiles, compared to other types of artmaking. Participant B talked again about metaphor, comfort, and the integral nature of textiles in our lives. The final question of the semi-structured interview revolved around time, whether time challenges could be overcome in a clinical setting, or whether there were any associated benefits with the sense of time related to textiles. Participant A began, “I love that you lose track of time.” Participant agreed that working with textiles could facilitate a more comfortable passage of time, “It can be really making a safe space for yourself even though the passage of time can be unbearable.” These two members then discussed how a therapist could learn about a client through how they approached the aspect of time when creating. When asked if the participants had any final words, one participant replied, “Thank you.” To which Participant B replied, “Yeah, just talking about it with other therapists, it just really helps you open up your brain more. This is like great, so energizing.” The researcher thanked all participants for attending and their engagement.

Third Data Set: Response Art.



Figure A



Figure B



Figure C

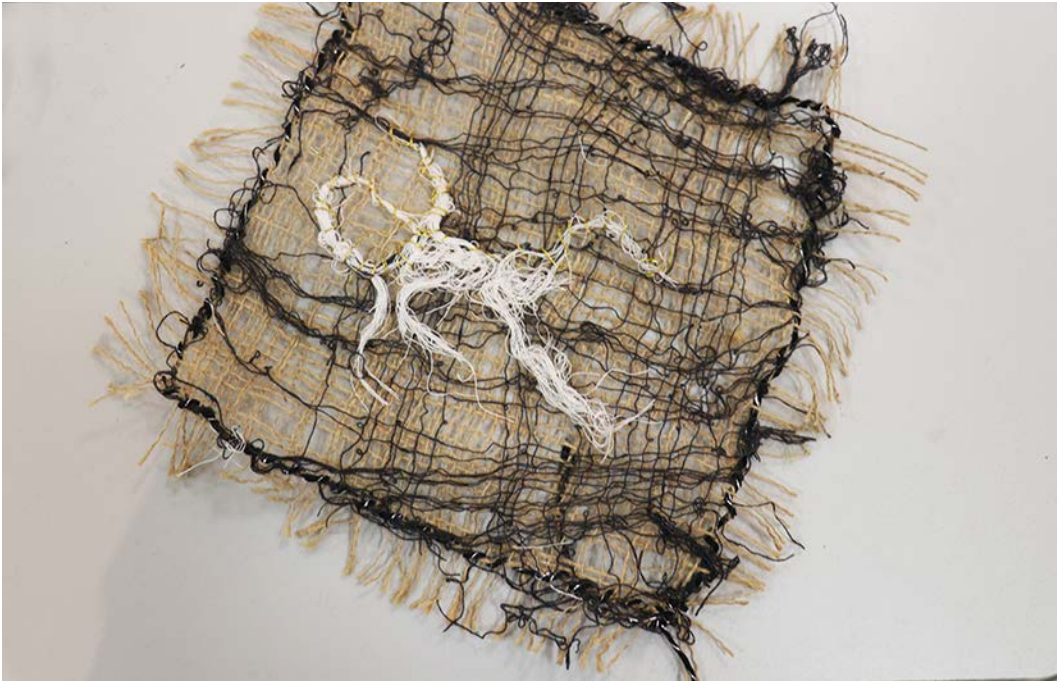


Figure D

Analysis of Data

The researcher began analysis by gathering survey and focus group data, viewing this and listening to the audio recording several times. Through looking at survey data, written notes, audio tape transcriptions, and the focus group artwork, similar understandings and repeated phrases were noted, as well as unique outcomes related to the larger areas of interest. In reviewing data, ideas clustered that were similar in subject matter. These clusters were then named and the data re-reviewed. In the process of clustering ideas, not all content could be included due to the nature of written analysis. Some nuance of information is inevitably lost in the research process. The five themes that emerged from the data and will be explored are gender identity, considerations of time, mindful qualities of textiles, textile work with children and adolescents, and the question of boundaries of technique. Relevant information from the survey is presented first, followed by findings of the focus group alongside information gleaned from the artwork.

Gender Identity.

Themes of gender identity were present in survey information and focus group discussion, as well as holding relevance to research participants. A large majority, 93.3% of the participants of the survey reported identifying as female, unsurprising as art therapy is a female dominated field. The researcher's assumption was that the majority of alumni e-mailed would be female. This also informs and situates the data. When asked about the gender identity of clients with whom they've used textile arts, 42 participants said they had used textiles with female clients, 28 participants said they had used textiles with male clients, 9 participants said they had used textiles with non-binary clients, 4 participants selected agender, 3 participants selected prefer to self-describe, and 1 participant selected prefer not to answer. This breakdown shows

that female identifying clients were still the majority, and that various gender identities were represented as well. In cross tabulation with ages of clients, there was a fairly even spread across all age groups of participants who had answered female and male. In the final section of the survey where participants could add anything they liked on the topic, one person wrote, "It is important to continue women's creative work by hand for many reasons". They did not elaborate, but it is a striking statement on women's creative work from the lens of textile making. Another survey participant added "I work at a high school, and I know some girls gravitate towards learning how to crochet, knit, or use beads to make things." They mentioned adolescent girls specifically here, rather than high schoolers in general.

In the focus group, there was an obvious dynamic of 5 women sitting together discussing a traditionally feminine arena of artmaking. Participant A shared that her grandmother taught her to knit. This familial passage of information is a commonly held entryway into textile making that illuminates the connective power of this type of art. "Dismissed" and "devalued" were words that Participant D and Participant B used respectively when describing how the gendered nature of working with textiles affects how textile making is generally viewed. This bolstered the researcher's reasons of wanting to champion textile artmaking. Textiles have not only been dismissed in the world of fine art, but also in art therapy. When members were asked directly about whether gender influences their clinical work with textiles, the three participating members declared that they would use textiles with people of any gender identity. Participant A stated, "I think it just depends on the person that I'm working with and what their issues are." She also discussed a successful group therapy session using textiles in setting with all men. "They all ended up getting so playful and bouncing off each other, and passing each other things to work with." Her quote aligns with the sense of play and social interaction described by Participant B in

her work with boys, aged approximately 7-10. "And so it was this kind of reopening up of play, which normally I think dress up, we think of with girls." This is an opening up of who one might traditionally think of using textiles with. There appeared two somewhat differing viewpoints, both within the survey and the focus group, that can likely be held together. Textile making is specifically important and valuable to women, fitting into a long, rich history. And textile making is important and potentially beneficial to people identifying in any way in regards to their gender.

Considerations of Time.

Time needed to create was seen to be the biggest challenge for both personal and clinical textile artmaking in the survey responses. When asking about perceived challenges of working with textiles in their personal artmaking, 29 participants selected "Time needed to create", compared to the second highest response "Difficulty of technique" at 18 selections. One survey participant elaborated, "Need time to learn techniques", demonstrating the link between the difficulty of a technique and the amount of time that one must spend. When cross tabulated against types of techniques personally engaged in, time was selected the most as a challenge for each of the techniques. The main perceived challenge when using textiles in clinical practice was "Time needed to create" with 26 selections, compared to the second highest at 19 selections, "Cost of materials." Both had high response rate and are serious considerations for art therapists. When cross tabulating perceived clinical challenges against techniques used clinically, time was selected the most for each technique with the exception of "crochet" and "macramé", where cost of materials was selected more.

Time was brought up in the focus group in how time functions in sessions with clients, and when artmaking with textiles at other times. Participant B twice mentioned how she planned

her time before considering what art project to embark upon during the focus group. Whereas Participant A stated that she had run out of time for what she planned to do. This did not appear to be a negative to Participant A, however, and she stated that she would finish it another time. Participant C expressed more than once that time was a challenge, or a reason, that kept her from using textile interventions with clients. Participant A also said of the challenges of textile making in session, "It's also just a stretch as far as time and resources and that's mostly the limiter." This echoes the survey responses where time was selected as the greatest challenge in clinical textile artmaking, and cost of materials, also describable as resources, as second. Time is one aspect of a session that can't be changed, but Participant A had an interesting perspective. She suggested starting with small projects and building towards a longer term project, so as not to overwhelm a client.

There also may be unforeseen benefits attached to this complication of time. When discussing knitting a scarf, Participant A stated, "Maybe it's the first time that you really feel proud of something you accomplished for yourself." There could likely be a link between this sense of accomplishment and the time spent on creating. When asked directly about time, and any potential positive aspects, participants A and B discussed the passage of time. Participant A stated that she loved losing track of time. In regards to her art piece (Figure 4A) she said, "I just got so lost in it." Participant B brought up the passage of time for clients, "clients that, you know, it's hard for you to sit still, you want time to pass, because you're like, it's hard for me to bear." These potential positive aspects of the relationship between time and textile making were not seen in the survey, but are valuable considerations in art therapy. When passing time is painful, textiles can be useful. They can also be useful for joyfully being lost in time, even when not distressed.

Mindful Qualities of Textiles.

Mindfulness was among the highest answers on the survey of the perceived benefits of working with textiles, both personally and clinically. It was the second most selected benefit for personal use, at 28 selections, compared to 34 selections of “aesthetic pleasure.” It was the most selected answer for clinical work at 34 selections. The second most selected answer was “improve positive mood” at 31 selections. In typed responses, one participant wrote how textiles can help a client to “slow down,” also indicating a sense of mindfulness. A popular word and area of study right now, it makes sense that there would be a focus on mindfulness. This is not to discount the qualities of working with textiles that may be particularly well suited to engaging in mindfulness.

In the focus group the concept of mindfulness was present throughout many conversations. It was only mentioned directly 4 times, however, language and aspects of mindfulness were brought up far more often. Participant B described how she uses textiles as a mindful tool, “I’ve mostly done it with kids, but with adults too, or if they’re not particularly open to mindfulness or grounding practices that you see more traditionally, doing something that looks like you’re just creating something.” This comment is a helpful example of problem solving for clients who struggle to connect with grounding or mindfulness exercises. Participant B also brought up mindfulness when discussing the benefits of making non-image based artwork, in the company of other benefits such as frustration tolerance. Participant C compared her artwork, Figure 1A, to a “relaxing and soothing” landscape backdrop on a drive. The researcher sees a sense of mindfulness in these comments and in her finished artwork. Participant A spoke about her artwork saying, “I really got to just relax. I really got to just use my hands and a different way.” Relaxation came up in conversation for two of the members in their artmaking as a

perceived benefit. Participant D did not mention mindfulness explicitly, but the repetitive and thoughtful nature of her artwork speaks to the impact of mindful attention. Mindfulness is an inherent aspect of many methods of working with textiles, such as embroidery, sewing, and weaving, as used by focus group members. As mentioned, it can be used in grounding exercises with children as well as adults. The textural qualities of the material may impact why it functions so successfully as a mindfulness tool.

Textile Work with Children and Adolescents.

One of the questions from the Qualtrics survey asked, "In your clinical work, what age clients have you used textiles with? Select all that apply." When adding up the categories of 0-26, including emerging adults among children and adolescents, there are 84 selections made, compared to 32 selections when adding up the answers for 26 through 80 and above. The previously mentioned comment about high school girls gravitating towards crocheting, knitting, and beadwork, supports that this population works well with textiles. This data shows a marked difference between working with those younger than 26 and older than 26. One possibility considered by the researcher is that more art therapists who answered the survey work with children than work with adults, in general. If there are truly more textiles being used in art therapy with children, and questions arise such as is this due to children being better suited to the material or are adults missing out on something with immense therapeutic potential.

The researcher did not directly ask the question on age from the focus group questions sheet that emerged from viewing survey responses. However, working with children or adolescents was mentioned several times. Participant A and B discussed children when asked about populations who could benefit from using textiles. Participant B stated, "I've done more the collage style work with children on the spectrum." Participant B mentioned weaving with

children at another point, and the benefit of regulation. She additionally stated that she believed she was able to do more work with textiles when she worked with kids. When discussing how to teach or engage clients in textile work, Participant A added, "Working with kids that are really self-conscious or really low self-esteem, it really does help them build a sense of purpose and encourages them to keep on feeling empowered to do things." Participant A also described working alongside her daughter on textile projects when discussing her own textile work, and her daughter's enjoyment of the work. Children and adolescents may be receiving the majority of textile based art therapy interventions, possibly due to the materials being regulating and focusing. It is curious that there would be markedly less work done with adults in the Qualtrics survey, and something for further study.

Boundaries of Technique.

In the survey information, a general theme emerged of the consideration of unstructured play, or collage, with textile materials as a clinical intervention. This type of art therapy using textile materials was not considered by the researcher in the listed answers for "techniques", so there were many answers typed in. In the "other" submission for the types of textile making used in clinical work, one respondent answered, "sensory stimulation, play-exploration of materials". Another wrote, "Fabric incorporated as a material". Seven people wrote in that they used collage with textile materials with their clients. One person clarified that they used textile materials, "for unspecified use but not offered specific technique". In the additional information section one person added, "I use a variety of cloth but mostly we glue the cloth rather than sew it". Still 23 people selected "sewing" and 21 people selected "beadwork" as activities they had done with clients, with many techniques with around 5 selections, showing that some therapists have used specific techniques as well in clinical practice. After "other", the next most common techniques

used were felting and weaving, each with nine selections. These answers brought up previously unconsidered ways of working that still fits under the textiles and art therapy umbrella.

In the focus group all members mentioned collage and free exploration of materials as useful in session. "It's like here are things, let's figure out how you can manipulate them," said Participant B. Participant C contributed, "I think it gives them a real strong sense of efficacy to be able to manipulate these materials and learn on their own." These are both emphatic statements on the benefits of client led exploration with textiles. In their personal artwork created, all four pieces indicate some learned technique. Participant C stated that she wanted to incorporate all techniques mentioned in the initial discussion and utilized embroidery, punch needle, sewing, and weaving in her artwork Figure 1A. In Figure 2A and 3A weaving techniques can be seen, and weaving was mentioned most by Participant B in her own interest in working with textiles. Sewing, which was the most selected technique used clinically in the survey, was used by Participant A in her artwork. Participant A and Participant B at one point in the focus group were brainstorming the use of sewing with a plastic needle, possibly into clay, by a male client who was blind. This discussion opens up the dichotomy of following a specific technique compared to unstructured play with materials, being somewhere in between the two. The impression from this set of data is that there may be more textile art therapy happening that is not related to a specific textile technique but more related to material play and exploration. Because of some of the benefits listed earlier, such as a sense of pride and accomplishment, this researcher sees benefits in using traditional textile techniques, as well as asking clients about skills they may be entering into therapy with but not vocalizing without prompt. The value of client led collage or unstructured play with materials is also apparent to the researcher.

Findings

Gender.

93.3% of survey respondents reported identifying as female, and all focus group participants identified as female, thus the data is coming from a female perspective. The survey data shows some slant towards working with female identifying clients with textiles. Some participants wrote in about the value of “women’s creative work” and how high school aged girls responded well to working with textiles. In the focus group each member reported gender not being a consideration when choosing materials, and two members spoke about their work with male identifying clients and textiles in a positive light. In summation, this research shows some gender influence and that textile based work may have a particular contextually benefit to working with women. It also shows that textile materials are likely beneficial to people of all genders.

Time.

Time was reported as the greatest challenge seen against using textiles in clinical session, as well as in personal artmaking, in both the survey and the focus group. Certainly, many forms of making with textiles are time intensive, however, the researcher finds this to be consistent with a contemporary American culture of busyness, productivity, and feelings of lack of time. Other associations between time and textile work were more positive, such as how time spent on textiles can increase a feeling of accomplishment. Additionally, textiles can help with the passage of time, when this can be painful for a client. Both of these thoughts were brought up in the focus group.

Mindfulness.

Working with textiles was informed by both the survey and focus group data to have particular benefit for client’s wishing to increase mindfulness. Many aspects of textile work lend it towards

mindfulness: the repetitive nature of many styles of work, and the sensory aspect and hands on engagement with materials. One participant spoke about using textiles, particularly with children, for increasing mindfulness and the grounding affect, she reported finding textiles as a helpful tool in mindfulness. The concept of slowing down also came up, associated with mindful observation of the present moment. Certain techniques such as embroidery, sewing, and weaving lend themselves to mindfulness. Each of these techniques was used during the artmaking portion of the focus group and relaxation was mentioned by multiple participants as an outcome of the artmaking time. In a time when mindfulness is being increasingly researched and its benefits are being hailed, it is worth paying attention to how textile art can be clinically and personally beneficial.

Children and Adolescents.

The value of using textiles based interventions in clinical work with children was emphasized in both the survey and focus group conversations. In the survey, the majority of work was reported to have been done with clients 26 and under. This matched comments from the focus group, such as one participant reporting using textiles more often when she worked with children than presently as she is working with adults. One thought around the reason textiles may be successful with children and adolescents is the regulating and focusing nature of the materials.

Boundaries of Technique.

The data from the artwork, focus group, and survey imply there is a difference in the types of ways that art therapists work personally and clinically with textiles. Unstructured interventions of exploration of textile materials, as well as collage work, were highly reported in the survey, as well as in the focus group. The researcher did not originally consider this type of artmaking with

textiles when creating the research study, however, it appears to be a large portion of work being done and deserves attention, conversation, and to grow.

Meanings

The aim of this study was to gain information on how art therapists use textiles personally or in clinical practice, and how they perceive the strengths and challenges of this type of artmaking. In the review of the literature on therapeutic work being done with textile materials, the majority of the studies focused on adult women, often in groups (Cohen, 2013; Blakeman, 2013; Collier 2011; Dickie, 2011; Garlock, 2016; Hanania, 2018; Heard, 2009; Moxley, Feen-Calligan, Washington, & Garriot, 2011; Segalo, 2014). The findings of this research support that work is currently being done with an opened concept of who one traditionally would consider a textile maker. An expansion of who we consider using textile arts with is called for by the findings of this study. People identifying as male, non-binary, or other identities than female are seen to have benefitted from working with textiles by those surveyed and participants in the focus group. Along with a wider conception of the typical gender identity of a client with whom one might use a textile based intervention, a wider conception and study of ages would be valuable. Multiple focus group participants noted the positive impacts of working with children and textile materials. In the literature, there was not research found on children and textile based interventions, connoting that it is an area that could benefit from further study. In both the research and literature the power of the group setting was remarked upon. Another opening up that is found to be important to the researcher is the expansion of what we consider “textile arts” to mean. Anything involving fabric, such as in collage or free exploration may be considered within the realm of textile arts. One concept brought up in the focus group was sewing into clay, and the possibilities of different, creative interventions increase.

There was not the same anxiety expressed around time and textile making found in the literature surveyed for this project. One potential influence is that some of the women worked with in groups had previous training or knowledge of a textile making technique. Baker even saw this as a potential benefit to artistic expression in therapy with survivors of trauma, "The art therapist can assist the client to uncover memories and skills of life before the trauma." (Baker, 2006, p.6) In the group that Baker discusses, there are older adult women engaging in needlework. Hanania (2018) also found using Syrian refugee women's previous knowledge of embroidery empowering and bonding for the group. If women are coming into therapy with a previous background in textile making, it may be particularly well suited and culturally appropriate to work within their own skill set.

Much of the literature discussed trauma and included therapeutic work being done with survivors of trauma (Baker, 2006; Canda, 1990; Cohen, 2013; Garlock, 2016; Hanania, 2018; Moxley, Feen-Calligan, Washinton, & Garriot, 2011; Segalo, 2014). This focus on trauma was mirrored in focus group discussion of populations who could benefit from art therapy with textiles. Focus Group participants discussed clients being able to move at their own pace and the effect of the textural qualities of the material. Participant A shared, "When working with people with trauma, it's important to have things for them to touch, and possibly even bring home as a transitional object." The other greatest perceived benefit from the focus group, and also the survey, was mindfulness. This again matched with other literature sources that emphasized the slowing down that can happen when making art with textiles, as well as the repetitive nature of many techniques (Wellesley-Smith, 2015, Collier, 2011; Field, 2014; McGinnis, 2014). Work being done on an international scale, and work being done by art therapists in southern California both found trauma work and mindfulness as two of the most important benefits to using textiles,

this commonality only further suggests the importance of future studies and to solidify common knowledge of the benefits of this material work.

Conclusions

As a student research project, this was a rich and engaging experience, as well as a place of a lot of learning. Holding the focus group was an enriching process which collected data through hearing several perspectives on using textiles personally and clinically. Participants of the focus group mentioned the experience of community during and the shared commonality of working with textiles. This research emphasizes the value of art therapists meeting and collaborating, especially with this focus of an underused material and potential interventions in art therapy. Participant B's last comment of the focus group was, "Just talking about it with other therapists, it just really helps you open up your brain more." One potential limitation of the study is the small number of participants, although this number still allowed for deep conversation and a rich group interview. When originally surveyed, ten people were interested in attending a focus group, then only three alumnae were available on the day of the focus group. A greater number of voices and perspectives added to this conversation would be a valuable contribution. Through sharing about their own personal practices, the interviewed art therapists emphasized that textile making was an important form of self-care. Participant A described a textile project by saying, "It was something I needed to do to soothe myself." In a field with high burnout, utilizing textiles with mental health practitioners and students could be beneficial and worthy of further study. Training programs could likely benefit from introducing textile techniques to students both as interventions to use with clients and as self-care practices. Another limitation of the study is the need to describe and categorize information that, at times, feels fluid or indescribable. This possibly speaks to the metaphysical nature of therapy, as well as the deep realm of women's

connection to textiles. Further study on the use of textiles in art therapy is warranted as there are many potential benefits to clients, individually or in group settings. In my own clinical practice, I have been engaging four and five year olds in felt collages, sewing yarn through punched holes, and weaving paper or yarn. I'm working in an early intervention program with clients who, although young, have severe trauma histories. Many of my clients are also ADHD and have benefitted from the focusing nature of textiles. Focus group conversation and survey results also noted that clients with trauma and clients with ADHD may particularly benefit from working with textiles. It has been personally rewarding to introduce these materials to my clients and to watch them gain confidence and skills in manipulating the materials. I hold a lot of hope for many more studies with textiles to be done in coming years, and for an increase in textiles to be used within art therapy.

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Appendix A

Dear Ms. Potter,

Thank you for submitting your IRB application for your protocol titled **Art Therapists' Work with Textiles**. All documents have been received and reviewed, and I am pleased to inform you that your study has been approved.

The effective date of your approval is **January 28, 2019 – January 27, 2020**. Please note that if there are any changes to your protocol, you are required to submit an addendum application to the IRB.

For any further communication regarding your approved study, please reference your **new IRB protocol number: LMU IRB 2019 SP 09**.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Julie Paterson

Julie Paterson | Senior Compliance Coordinator | Loyola Marymount University | 1 LMU Drive | University Hall #1718 | Los Angeles, CA 90045 | (310) 258-5465

Appendix B

Email sent to potential participants:

Dear LMU graduate,

My name is Sarah Potter, and I am a MFT Trainee in the Marital and Family Therapy Department at Loyola Marymount University. I am conducting a research study on the role of textiles in Art Therapist's clinical work and personal artmaking.

I am sending out this survey with the hopes that you will consider completing it. It should take approximately 5 minutes. If you choose to complete the survey, please do so by February 11, 2019.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you. I appreciate any help you are able to provide in this research process.

Thanks,

Sarah Potter

Appendix C

<p>1. Have you worked in the mental health field since graduating from LMU?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Yes >No
<p>2. Q2 - Are you currently working in the mental health field?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Yes, with MFT licensure and AT registration >Yes, with MFT licensure >Yes, with AT registration >Yes, in other capacities >Not currently working
<p>3. Q3 - What is your age?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >21-30 >31-40 >41-50 >51-60 >61-70 >71-80 >80 and above
<p>4. With which gender do you most identify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Male >Female >Non-Binary >Agender >I choose to identify as >I choose not to answer
<p>5. Do you use textiles as a material choice? Please select all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >In my personal artmaking >In my clinical work >Never
<p>6. How frequently do you use textiles as a material choice in your personal artmaking practice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Daily >Weekly >Monthly >Yearly >Sometimes (less frequently than yearly)
<p>7. What types of textile making do you personally engage in? Please select all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Weaving >Knitting >Quilting >Sewing >Embroidery >Crochet

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Lacemaking >Needlepoint >Cross-stitch >Basketry >Beadwork >Felting >Macramé >Dyeing and other surfaces >Other
<p>8. What are your perceived benefits of working with textiles personally? Select all that apply, and/or write your own response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Engaging in mindfulness > Improve positive mood > Decrease negative mood > Social support > Aesthetic pleasure > Cognitive stimulation > Other:
<p>9. Perceived challenges when working with textiles personally? Select all that apply, and/or write your own response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Time needed to create >Cost of materials >Access to materials >Difficulty of technique >other
<p>10. How frequently do you use textile arts in your clinical work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Daily >Weekly >Monthyl >Yearly >Sometimes >Never
<p>11. Which types of textile making have you used in your clinical work? Please select all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Weaving >Knitting >Quilting >Sewing >Embroidery >Crochet >Lacemaking >Needlepoint >Cross-stitch >Basketry >Beadwork

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Felting >Macramé >Dyeing and other surfaces >Other
<p>12. In your clinical work, what age clients have you used textiles with? Select all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >0-5 >5-11 >12-17 >18-26 >27-55 >56-79 >80 and above
<p>13. In your clinical work, have you used textiles in treatment with people who identify with the following genders?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Male >Female >Non-binary >Agender >Prefer to self-describe >Prefer not to answer
<p>14. What are your perceived benefits of working with textiles in your clinical work? Select all that apply, and/or write your own response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Engaging in mindfulness > Improve positive mood > Decrease negative mood > Social support > Aesthetic pleasure > Cognitive stimulation > Other:
<p>15. Perceived challenges when working with textiles in a mental health setting? Select all that apply and/or write your own response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Time needed to create >Cost of materials >Access to materials >Difficulty of technique >other
<p>16. Would you be willing to engage in a focus group on the Loyola Marymount University campus?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Yes, I'm available February 17th from 10-1 >Yes, I'm available February 17th from 1-4 >Yes, I'm available February 23rd from 10-1 >Yes, I'm available February 17th from 1-4 >No, I'm not available

17. May I contact you about the focus group via e-mail?

>Yes, my e-mail address is

>No, I do not want to participate in a focus group

18. Is there anything you would like to add on this topic?

>Yes

>No thank you

Appendix D**Informed Consent Form**

Date of Preparation January 12, 2019

Loyola Marymount University

(Art Therapists' Work with Textiles)

- 1) I hereby authorize Sarah Potter MFT Trainee to include me in the following research study: Art Therapists' Work with Textiles.
- 2) I have been asked to participate in a research project which is designed to learn more about the ways in which art therapists' work with textiles in their personal artmaking time as well as in their professional lives, and which will last for approximately 2 hours.
- 3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I am a graduate of the Loyola Marymount Marital and Family therapy program.
- 4) I understand that if I am a subject, I will participate in a voluntary focus group.

The investigator will begin the focus group with short demonstrations by participants, followed by an art prompt and a discussion.

These procedures have been explained to me by Sarah Potter MFT Trainee.

- 5) I understand that I will be asked to be audiotaped in the process of these research procedures. I understand photographs will be taken of my artwork created during the focus group. It has been explained to me that these tapes and photographs will be used for research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the tapes and photographs will be deleted from all digital storage after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.
- 6) I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: nervousness, embarrassment, disclosing personal and private information, and breach of confidentiality.
- 7) I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are expanded knowledge of the current usage of textile arts by art therapists.
- 8) I understand that Sarah Potter, who can be reached at 443-534-7398, and Debra Linesch who can be reached at 310-338-7674, will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.
- 9) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
- 10) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to (e.g., my future medical care at LMU.)

- 11) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
- 12) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
- 13) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.
- 14) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Moffet, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 at david.moffet@lmu.edu.
- 15) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

Subject's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Appendix E

Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

Would you reflect on the benefits of working with textiles personally? The challenges?

What are the benefits of working with textiles in clinical practice? What are the challenges?

Do you think that textiles occupy an overlooked, underappreciated position within art therapy, and why?

How can textiles be incorporated more into clinical art therapy work, any specific interventions?

What would influence you towards using textiles in therapy with someone, any specific diagnoses or populations that you think it would be particularly helpful for?

When working with clients using textiles, is the client coming into therapy already with a textile based skill, or is the therapist teaching the client a way of manipulating the materials?

How does gender play a role in working with textiles personally and in clinical work?

How does age of the client affect textile artmaking?

How does social support relate to textile making?

Do you incorporate any sewing in your practice? Is it hand sewing or machine sewing?

How does the role of time affect textile creation, personally and in clinical practice?

Appendix F**Focus Group Transcription**

- A Look how gorgeous that is, it's so subtle.
- C I don't have the patience for that one.
- B You don't have the patience for that one?
- C Embroidery is the one thing that I don't have the patience for.
- D This book here, I think at the end or the back, talks about the neurological consequences of the repetition. Well, all of these have repetition.
- C That's why I've been so drawn to it, especially when I was working with kids last year. Using like weaving and things like that as a form of like regulating.
- A That's a really wonderful way
- D Where are you working now Kathleen?
- C Um, I'm working for the people concern with homeless clients, so it's part case management part therapy. So it's a really different way of using these skills. The dyeing, I've got a client who I was thinking of. I just got her into an apartment, and she didn't want white sheets, but that's all that we could get for her, and I'm like oh we could do natural dyeing to help her get comfortable in her space. I think fiber arts and the home are really meaningful. And creating ownership over your space, very exciting.
- A Did you know the expressive arts conference is coming up, there's a talk "Art of a Shoestring budget" you might be interested in checking that out.
- B Yeah.
- A You can get all sorts of CEUs for it.
- B I'm not to CEUs yet, but it's still fun to learn.
- A No, but you get workshop credit don't you?
- B I have no idea.
- A Towards your hours...
- B I didn't know that was a thing.

C Documented as training or something

A It's useful in your work though, it's inspiring too

D If there's a real interest, and I feel an interest from you. I know there were others who were interested too that couldn't attend today who were also interested in this. Maybe we could create something in the research institute that becomes a support group for particularly investigating textiles.

B That would be cool

D Brainstorming with each other

A That would be really cool

A Well, that one piece that I did that I was telling you about, the tapestry with the ribbons, I made that cause, and I hope I'm not offending anybody, when I heard that Trump was going to be running for President. And I remember sitting at home and thinking oh my god I have to do something that makes me feel like I'm in control, or that I am in favor of tolerance and acceptance and flexibility. And so that's where this one the ribbons, you know they're flexible, they're comforting. The repetitive pattern of knitting was a huge thing, it was really really soothing.

And it was very much on the lines of you know, what you're talking about too. It was something I needed to do to soothe myself. And also as a message at the end, it looks almost like a rainbow. But as I was doing it I was like wow I wasn't aware of what I was doing until I was doing it, like oh that's what I'm doing. The beauty of the artmaking process.

B Yeah, being in control for sure.

A But you know, there's also a form of unpredictability that comes with it too, oh gosh this one's much thinner than that one I have to adapt to it, oh what do I do to add to it to make it all balance out. So it even is a metaphor talking about what I had to do to make it work was really valuable. I have it behind my couch in my office. I keep on wanting to add things to it, but I never do. But I want to make one for my room, for my house. And this is something that's interesting too and then I'll shut up so you guys can read.

Um, I'm recently I'm going through a divorce right now. What I realized though, my husband and I rebuilt our house, I never put art in our bedroom. I could never settle on a piece of art for the bedroom. He's like Jill you're an artist, make something. I'm like I was not inspired, and now I'm inspired to make something for my room.

- C Wow.
- A But I want to make something soft and along the lines of this, something that is cozy and soft and comforting.
- D So A brought in some bags of stuff B, kind of on the floor there are her donations. And I'm thinking, R, that if it's all right with you that we think about those bags as a donation to this workshop and anyone should take what they are inspired to use in their work. How great if you could take away from here not just inspiration but some actual materials.
- B Yeah.
- A Totally, love that. I was hoping they would disappear and be given to good homes.
- A I love that all of this is hand stitched, like there aren't any machines used.
- D You know that we now have a machine here.
- A I noticed that.
- D It's super fun to use the machine often on top of other things.
- B Yeah.
- A I did a series of a bunch of postcards and I sewed paper on paper and it was really fun, just using it as a design element was fun. Do you guys do that? You do that probably.
- C Sewing onto paper?
- A Sewing onto anything just as a design.
- C I don't like embroidery.
- A But the sewing machine...
- C No, I haven't, no.
- B I've only handstitched into paper, I've never used a sewing machine. I don't know why not.
- A It's super fun. Well, it's the lazy person's version.
- B Yeah, that sounds great.

[laughter]

D Quick gratification.

C I've done some hand quilting, but I haven't done it in a while. If I'm doing a hand quilting project I need a lot of distance afterwards. I don't like embroidery or like hand stitching.

A I love it, but I have really severe carpal tunnel right now, I need to get surgery. And so my hands in the last couple years, the fine motor skills and also the touch, the sensation, is gone. I have moments where it's in and moment's where it is out. So if I do it repetitively, I have to stop, do some other stuff, and then come back it. So it's really sad, because I love it so much.

C Have you knit your whole life?

A My grandmother did. And I make rectangles, I don't do anything special with it. But no, my grandma did and I have pictures at eight years old knitting with my grandma.

C I heard that knitting is helpful for preventing carpal tunnel and arthritis in the hand.

A Maybe I'm not doing it enough?

[laughter]

B It hurts me, the same, I have to take breaks because it hurts my hands. I don't know if that means you have to be building up muscles for it, but it feels not good for my hands.

A I do so many different things, somebody told me it's repetitive use, somebody told me it's just lots and lots of use.

C Probably a mix.

A And all of us are artists, so we've all done lots of different things our whole lives, right, so, I'm a lot older than you guys. And I think it's also genetic.

C Yeah, that's true.

B This is like a total aside, but I had an old massage therapist who was using his hands all the time very aggressively. He would have to do very extreme, extreme to me, things such as soaking his hands in ice cold water for like an hour or whatever to like reduce the effects, the swelling and stuff. When your career is

- actively harming your body, but then you need to maintain it in order to do the thing that you love. There's a weird tension I guess.
- A And I think that's part of the adaptation too. Because I know that my work has gotten a lot more loose and expressive over the years as a result of having less control. I used to really enjoy wire wrapping, with beads and stuff, and now it's a lot looser and messier, and I'm getting okay with the messy. And I think that's part of growing up and being okay with myself being imperfect
- B It's like a very parallel process.
- A And also being a parent has kind of changed my whole perspective. This is a treasured time, where okay I can have time to myself to do something fun. And just when I'm going to be getting into it I need to stop. So what can I do that gets me where I need to go and I can get into it really quickly, and still be able to get something from it.
- B Having that short time span almost forces you into having that self-care daily, because you can only do a certain amount of time. You have to let it accumulate, like your body is forcing yourself to be nice.
- A Do you guys find that in the work that you do, even though you want your client to choose and you have an array of things for your client to choose from, based on what you want them to achieve from the session or other concerns, sometimes if I have a client who is not used to doing art and I'm in the mood to do something I'll put the stuff out and start playing with it and then they get curious and start engaging.
- And then sometimes we do it together, sometimes not, but then I get my fill and they get their fill. It's important to get that part in for yourself too, in between clients, throughout the day, processing the day. It's nice to get a couple minutes here and there and that's exactly what I do.
- D It's a really important thing to do to communicate your love of the process to your clients, that's one of the biggest gifts. If you're not really offering something that comes from your heart. Your therapeutic potential is really diminished. That's something you can all talk about, we can talk about, the idea of this kind of material maybe invites more interaction in a different way than the traditional art materials.
- B I think it's really playful. A lot of fiber arts I don't know where to place them on the expressive continuum. They can be very structured, but I also equate them to like clay and so sculptural and can access the playful and bring up so many different things with that tactile sensation. So it seems like a very magical in between space so I don't know how to categorize it and you can really make it do whatever you want.

- D And even the whole categorizing, as if there's a boundary between craft and art
- A That's a good question.
- D That boundary is really questionable.
- B Especially now, I think it's gendered too.
- D Well that's a really important thing that R found a lot of in the literature
- B Yeah.
- R And on all of this, this is like the best for our later discussion to hear you guy already like on the same track and having so many ideas about it
- D And in being gendered, being dismissed.
- C For sure.
- B Or disvalued, devalued.
- D Right.
- C I saw on Instagram, it was like advertised for me, it was like a video of the owner of this company talking about his wonderful company. It was a young white guy in his early mid-twenties who has a company that makes quilts out of tee-shirts. And I'm like moms and grandmas have been doing this for so many years and he acts like he's got this wonderful idea, you just send your tee-shirts in and you get them repurposed. And also he's hiring women in the community and they're getting jobs and whatnot.
- And I'm like you're capitalizing on something that women have been doing for years and are fully capable of having their own business for, but, can't, and it was so frustrating for me. And I like shared it on Facebook and posted like my opinions about it. And then of course a younger white guy kind of chimes in and was like well guys should be able to pursue whatever career they want to.
- [laughter]
- A Yeah, it has nothing to do with that. You're missing the point.
- C It's interesting how men who get into fiber work get a lot of credit, whereas women don't. Like in galleries, I don't know about the literature that you've read, if well-known fiber artists commonly are men. At least in galleries and what I've seen, there's a lot of men who get showcased.

- A I didn't know that. But that's a whole thing in itself because I just heard on KCRW was announcing some concert, some place in Europe, and they were dedicated to half women artists. They are dedicated to having half of the performers be female. And I'm like really that's a thing, oh my god, that is a thing. And I started thinking just with artists too, when you go to galleries, anything.
- C Yeah.
- A So much more men, so much more often men get the notoriety more than the women do.
- C Yeah.
- D Do you want to move into the workshop?
- R: Yeah I think that would work really well right now, if anyone feels ready to start?
- C I can share mine.
- D Do you want us to think about managing time, like ten minutes.
- R Ten minutes a person.
- D That would take us to ten after 11, unless you wanted to do 5 minutes a person.
- R Somewhere between 5 and 10 a person, but feel free to take up to ten.
- B Have you done felting with a client.
- C I was thinking about that on my drive over here that I really do need to do it.
- B My memory when you taught that felting workshop, thinking that would be...
- A I want to know how to felt.
- C I want to do it but I haven't figured out the right intervention.
- B Yeah.
- C I'll figure it out someday.
- C Um I brought rug hooking materials which is like an old art form from the Scots who brought it to the United States maybe in like the 1700s or 1800s. It's boiled wool so that way the wool doesn't fray and you cut it into strips, this would be a wider strip that you could cut with a rotary cutter and a ruler. But there's also, it's

an expensive hobby if you go deep into it, you can buy a hand cranking cutter that'll cut like several pieces at once, and much smaller ones, these are cut with that hand cranking one. It's actually my mom's.

So, I got my mom into this art form as well and the way I learned about it was in San Miguel de Allende. There's this group called Las Racheritas and they've been doing rug hooking since the 90s. They create imagery from their culture like a hummingbird and the sheep shows up a lot in rug hooking. I'm wondering if the artist who made this if she was kind of combining the two cultures like the American rug hooking with her own Mexican culture too.

A That's cool.

C If you guys want to look at that. And then this one I completed a few years ago.

A Oh wow.

C This is actually my only completed rug hook because they take a while to make. I like the back, the back is almost more satisfying.

B These little colors in here are so nice.

C And this is another work in progress, I learned how to do monochromatic work the summer went to a rug hooking convention in Ohio. I was the youngest person there.

D Were there men there?

C I don't think there were, yeah, there is a guy, his name is G, who's very popular in the rug hooking industry, who does workshops, but I think everyone in the classes where women, older women, mostly older white women too, I would say. I wasn't sure about going to this convention in Ohio. I was like, I don't know what this is going to be like. And they actually ended up being really cool women. They had a section that was, they had a big gallery show as well, and they had a portion that was about social justice. And these women made really amazing rugs about different issues going on right now.

So I was very pleasantly surprised that there is a, at least a good group of women in there who seem to be pretty inclusive. And then the tools that you use may vary. This was my very first hook. These are like the official rug hooking hooks that you can use, but this was the first one I used. It's from, you know, like those caps that you pull hair out to frost tips. This is the hook that you would use to pull your hair out with the cap, which is like the same size as the hook. So I figured that out. Then the backing that you use is burlap.

- B I didn't realize what this was for. I just like, I've been taking home art supplies from my grandma's house, now I know what this is.
- A I have one of the ones that could cheat a rug hook that has like a little clasp, but it goes like, has a little thing that
- B I grew up doing that latch hooking.
- A Yeah. Those are fun.
- C I can show you guys if you guys want. We can cut the burlap up.
- A I brought a couple of little pieces too, small.
- C Oh, cool.
- A Yeah, they're over there.
- C What you do is, let's see this will contrast nice.
- A You did this all by yourself. You have machines to do this. I love that.
- B Yeah. That you don't have to buy it is awesome.
- A So you just put it in the hot washing machine or do you actually boil it in a pot?
- C I usually boil it cause I also, a lot of these I dyed. So that was the other thing, jumping into this rabbit hole is I learned how to dye. This one is like, I learned how to spot dye. This one is ombre.
- D This is finding a piece of fabric wool, not yarn, right?
- C Yeah. It's fabric. Oh and here's, here's the wool. These are all boiled. So this is what they feel like.
- A So do you like small pieces that will fit into the pot or do you buy big, big pieces?
- C I buy a big piece but then I'll cut them up into like the size probably.
- A Cut it into this size. And then you boil it and then you turn it into that.
- C Or I'll like boil a piece as big as this too, depending how much I want. I think, yeah, they sell them in quarters.
- D How long do you boil it?

- C I think like I do like maybe 15, 20 minutes. I don't know if there's any rule of thumb to it.
- A Do you put it in the dryer afterwards
- C I dry them with high heat to like further kind of felt them. So I went into like whole dying journey through this process as well.
- B What did you use to dye this?
- C Online, There's like dyes that you can buy that are better for wool. When I first started I bought like the Rit dye, you know, at the store and it wasn't really potent.
- B I forgot that you can buy dye, I've been just using like plants.
- [laughter]
- C Yeah, you can get all kinds of colors.
- A It smells good
- C It's fun to do, like on a rainy day and yeah, but so what do you do is you take a piece of wool and then you stick your hook into one of the holes in your burplap backing and then you just pull it through like that. And you leave a little tail, it gets caught eventually. And then in the next hole up, you, let's see ...
- A Are you skipping holes, or do you go just directly to the next one?
- C Depending on how loose the burlap is, it all started to get really tight and you'll have to do every other hole. But in the beginning it kind of, starts as every hole, then I go to every other, um, I do it just on kind of feel. The hook goes under and then it catches it like that. And then you pull, pull it through and then you have a little loop and then you do the next one and learn and catch it. And then you have another loop and you want to try to make the loops even in length.
- B And when you get to the end of the string, you just let the tail hang?
- C When you get to the end, um, you pull it all the way through and up. They want all the tails to be sticking up for some reason and then you cut them.
- A I would imagine if they didn't, you can just go [noise] and take the whole thing back out.
- C If you didn't like it, you can pull it out. It's very easy. Or you can accidentally pull it out too, which is frustrating.

[laughter]

- C It's kinda like, um, like any rug making where it just like the volume of the fibers kind of keep it all in place. Um, this one I could probably, if I want, I could easily pull one out with the hook. I don't want to, but I could.
- B Thinking about like, just the way you pulled that out and we had like a reaction to it. That can be like, you know, almost like a mandala where you're like building up this thing that's slow and methodical, and then take it apart. Letting go of things that you're weaving into it that you don't want anymore.
- D Even intentionally put something in that you don't like, that's discordant and then pull it out.
- B Sit with it for a while, build around it, and then take it out.
- D That's a beautiful idea, what a metaphor.
- C Yeah, that sounds nice.
- D What's interesting to me is that you don't embroider, and you don't like embroidery, and you think you don't like embroidery because of its precision. But this seems to me...
- C I think this, I can keep one hand on top and one on the bottom and just keep going. What I don't like about embroider is there's a lot of like moving my hands around.
- B I think maybe pulling, things can get caught when you're working through this.
- D Do you get into the zone more easily with this?
- C Yes. Yeah. I really get into the zone with this.
- D That looks like it, beautiful.
- C I like this and I got into it because after I saw them in San Miguel, then I would see it everywhere. It was like something that my eye kept catching. And I realized like it's an art form that not many people do, certainly on the west coast. I think maybe in the midwest and the east coast it's more popular. Um, but I really like dying arts and keeping them alive.
- B Do you see this in museums ever?

- C I've seen it in museums that are of American history and stuff like that, especially on the east coast, like giant rugs that women have made. But not in like, I'm not really in like any art museums.
- B Yeah.
- A It's kind of rough because like the Chinese, you see like the Chinese silk rugs for the Turkish rugs. Those really are pieces of art walls.
- C I love rugs.
- A Just so much potential.
- C The story behind this one is I made this when there was all this talk about whether or not the states we're going to let Syrian refugees in. And then I was thinking about like what it's like to come to America and the Neil diamond song, They're Coming to America, and how like immigrants who come to America are not really greeted with a ballad. Um, and so that's where the line came from. And then the symbolism is these are popular images from, um, quilts from the underground that were using the underground railroad and the chains representing like, um, slavery and the states and how like we're not very welcoming.
- D Like an emotional welcome mat.
- B Thank you for sharing
- D It could be a really great transitional object in termination.
- A So I wish I'd brought a sample. I didn't, um, I have pictures. Let me see if I can pull up the picture and I didn't want to be looking at it.
- [inaudible 33:00 – 33:35]
- A I started doing something for my daughter's room and I wanted something also that would be, like, I love that this artwork is doing things like, this is also a sound buffer too. Like if you have it on the wall it absorbs sound, so peaceful. So I figured felt. Like it just felt really good to make these flowers. This is a really bad example, like a little example. So basically like this is something I do with my daughter. She would tell me where to put something. I put glue down, she'd stick it down. But this, darn it. Sorry. Um, okay. That's this piece. Oops. The ribbons. Oh, I guess everything is opening now. Sorry. Um, these are the ribbons
- C And they're knit together?
- A Yeah. I took the wire out of all of them. That was part of the process too. It was like pulling the wire out of all the ribbons and making it big not with all that wire

but all that finding stuff. I mean like a big ball out of the wire. And then well do I want to be like mix and match happenstance or do I want to be in a pattern? And I was debating, do we want to do it this way or this way because I'm on hand, it's like there's fertile ground, I was kind of thinking about the stages of therapy. Like what happens in a session over time, you know, like how'd it circles back? But also just starting with a blank slate and not really knowing what you're, see if I can remember what I was thinking when I did this. Um, coming into a bit, like you're in a fog when you start therapy and nothing is really making sense. You're kind of an open slate but there's no focus. And then things start to come into focus. And then you start to feel stuff and you feel kind of intensely and there's, you know, you can, you can feel it, the angry, the sadness, the happiness, the love, the loss and then eventually that growth piece and then growth. So that's kind of why I decided to put it that way. But you know, I used every single, like some of them are velvety, some of them are Mesh, some of them are corrugated.

D And you used big knitting needles?

A I used, yeah. I wish I could close this part. I don't know.

D There is a way to do that.

A Wait. Yeah. Oh wait, no. Okay. Yeah. So this is an example that you can pass around of the sewing, sewing on the paper. I'm fanatical about like different papers. Yeah. So I love using different kinds of papers and I've always have.

B I love those.

A What we started doing was, because I have all these scraps, and she liked sticking things on. So I don't know what we were doing.

D Kids like doing that

A Yeah. She wanted to make a heart.

B And was that just Elmers glue?

A A little bit of Elmers, a little bit of hot glue. It depends on like what it was, but again, instant gratification. She wanted something, she, you know, Mommy, let's do this.

B It's containment. Like there's so much chaos, but you're still within the bounds of a shape. Yeah.

A And it's like, this is big.

- D It's also fabric arts don't have to be just fabrics. But the boundary, again, between some things being fabric, some of these being paper or glue.
- B You know, like you can use glue. You can use glue and you can use paper. Yeah.
- D That's really cool that we're opening our minds to lots of boundary crossing.
- A Well, I love the idea of like the handmade papers are really fibers to begin with.
- D It's almost fabric, fabric is almost paper anyway.
- A One of my favorite papers feels like a bird nest. It's like all these like twigs are put together this list and you can weave with that stuff
- B You can weave with anything.
- D It's right at the place of that boundary.
- A Like this was my daughter's costume. Let me see if there's a better picture of it. This one was with the sewing machine, but the face, the eyes and stuff that was super fun because with the buttons and mixing and mixing parts to stick out, mixing parts that were flat, the three dimensional aspect of it. This was something we made together, again. These are all little pouches. And there were her gift pouches for her birthday last year and we put little ribbons on there and you can send them, some of them have gems on them.
- B So those are all separate. I was thinking...
- A These are all separate. Yeah, I know. I was thinking I really want to put it together, but like keep away. So I just had all these shapes and I started just layering them and then they became flowers. But um, on my Pinterest page you can see all my inspiration and like all these things that are woven into each other. Like, you know, those, those chain link scarves that people make with the felt. So like that kind of thing that's raised off the surface, but it absorbs sound. That's originally what I was thinking for my tapestry for my office. I actually think if I had time I really would've liked to basket stitch around all those because it would have been so beautiful with complimentary colors. That would have been amazing. So as far as demonstration, like I said, I mean I think it's pretty self-explanatory. I did take the ones that were left over and she put jewels on some of these too. And I used them as pouches, I put them like on this wide thing so you can actually put things into them and then it's on a bulletin board. So you can put things in and around, actually still use you use it for storage.
- B I was just, when you were talking about the textures, I'd kind of seen this when I was looking through this book, I think they called it bubble fabric.

- A But she made her own.
- B Yeah, and that as a sound absorbing thing or even, I don't know. That's really cool.
- C Oh that's how you make it?
- B You shove it through these rings, the wire.
- C It looks like a cookie drying rack.
- [laughter]
- B Yeah.
- C That's really funky.
- B I had not seen that before.
- A That's really, really neat. I'd never seen it done before. Like obviously somebody did it by hand before it was mechanized. But anyway, so those are my things. I don't really know, the knitting thing, I can show you how to start into it and do like a basic stitch?
- R I think getting a sense of your work and hearing you speak about is...
- A I think that's enough, right?
- D Everybody wants to sort of pick your brain a little.
- R: All right. Thank you for sharing.
- D I have something to share but it'll take a minute. I just have to go get mine. I feel like it will be a contribution.
- A I want to see if I can find more of these samples.
- B I've been so into weaving like the past few months and just like, I think that I was so excited about this focus group because I feel like I've really been engaging in fiber arts a lot lately. But the weaving, just realizing you can weave literally anything into there, I have started saving everything. Like trash, but it changes the meaning of it so much.
- B Ooh.
- A Oh wow.

D So I worked sort of adjacent to this project at one point almost. I run a group of, interfaith women, Muslim, Christian and Jews. And we studied texts from the Koran, the Torah and the New Testament. And this was a pass around made by three women who wrote a passage of the Koran around, and the passage of the Hebrew Torah and then from the Bible is blessed be, probably the only one we can read, blessed are the peacemakers is at the center. And they pass this around inside an embroidery hoop.

And what was really beautiful about it was embroidering each other's texts as the making precious, that it's a sacred text of another person's traditions. I ran this group through a lot of the times when there were, terrible terrorist activity, and it became a safe place for women to share their anxieties around each other's faith, around their own faith, around fundamentalism in all of the faiths and to just see that these texts can be shared, humanized and respected. So this was made by a Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

A Do you know if the texts are from the same passage?

D Unfortunately, I can't read the text other than the...

A But I wonder if they said anything about, cause the English translation is, it's the same section of the Bible, because the Qur'an is so similar. They're all similar to each other.

D Right, well we had done a lot of studying together as a group before we moved into this project and they went back and chose texts that had been meaningful to them. And when they made this and shared it in the small triads, they knew what the texts meant. This was two years ago now and I can't recall it. So I'm very interested in the idea of, tolerance and respecting each other through women's ways of knowing, and women's ways of making things. And particularly when it breeds what we really need to have happen, which is more dialogue between and across difference. There were a whole bunch of this of these made.

A Small groups of women that were all...

D Triads, there were 21 women, seven Christians, seven Jews, and seven Muslims.

B That's beautiful.

A Did you start that when I saw you in Israel like eight years ago? I think you were going to Haifa or something when I saw you.

D Yeah. We bumped into each other.

- A I was pregnant with my daughter. Yeah. Six weeks pregnant with my daughter and I ran into her.
- D I had been teaching in Haifa and had been very interested in, because Haifa is one of the only places in Israel where the Arab community is somewhat integrated. In a class I taught at the University of Haifa I had a religious Jews, secular Jews, religious Christians, secular Christians, religious Muslims and secular Muslims in the class and they all, and it was a very hard, hard to, hard to create cohesion. Some of the ideas that came from that trip. Yeah. Okay. So, and I love embroidery.
- C I appreciate it, it's so beautiful. I just, every time I tried it I can't.
- D And in particular embroidering texts it's like it's, it's touching the text.
- C Yeah. I like that you can see the under work through.
- D Oh, that's interesting.
- B I love that it. It makes the fabric feel so papery and like skin to be able to see the veins under it.
- D And then none of these women had any embroidery experience.
- B Wow.
- C To embroider texts like that too.
- D I don't know if the Arabic is actually legible though. I'd like to do more of this kind of work, I'd like to get back to it.
- B Okay, I was talking a little bit about weaving. I think I got into weaving, it's kind of a long story, but I went to these, there's bartering classes in La for sharing knowledge, mostly about art making, but it's all sorts of stuff. But I like learned about weaving through that, and like a very simple way that I thought I could share with clients. I was going to pick up picture frames from goodwill, I just didn't have time. That way we could make our own looms very easily.
- R I have little cardboard looms here, and one tiny one.
- B After I made my own looms, I've started just turning anything into a loom. I started weaving with everything, and making everything a loom. And like I have, does everyone know what gutter guard is? It's like this wire mesh that you probably buy at Home Depot, to put in your gutters to like catch leaves and stuff. But I've actually started, I dunno, weaving becomes a loose term, but weaving into that. It's like part embroidery part weaving.

- C How big are the holes?
- B Very small
- [laughter]
- B Yeah, they kind of morph the hole too.
- D Gutter guard, this is a big takeaway.
- B I like in a sculptural way.
- D So it holds its shape?
- B Yeah, and you can put fabric with glue on it to make soft sculpture kind of stuff. I should have brought stuff in. I have so much stuff at home.
- A They sell stuff that's very similar. They call it like sculpting mesh.
- D It's probably cheaper when you buy it at Home Depot.
- A Totally.
- C You could use screening too.
- B Yeah. Yeah. I think the gutter guard is stronger, or more sturdy but yeah. I've started kind of playing, yeah, I guess the gutter guard as a fabric almost, like different ways that you can manipulate it, because you can also use that to like make paper and stuff. You can use it for like whatever you want. I started making boxes and covering them in fabric, and then filling them with yarn scraps. I, I really should have brought stuff in.
- A Do you have pictures on your phone or anything?
- B Nope.
- [laughter]
- D You're giving us an imagined [inaudible]...
- B I can send pictures later if you want. Yeah, so I've been just kind of applying weaving almost as a way of approaching materials, and being like, how can I turn this into a weaving, kind of stuff. Um, but then I think I've also been really, in the same way you were talking about the saving all those ribbons, I save clothing. I've recently tried to get rid of all of my clothes, because they're like all from middle school and high school. I've just haven't grown.

- A It's amazing they fit.
- B Um, and so some of them have a lot of meaning and so I will cut them up to use for weaving. And some of them have a lot of challenging memories attached. So it's like, how do I want to transform them? Do I not want to transform the meaning there? What does it mean to take that fabric and donate it to my art therapy supplies? I think it was a lot of things together. I just think fabric can carry so much with it, and then to transform it as well, just builds up a lot of different associations. I was just, I think I've been doing a lot of weaving, a lot of knitting.
- And with the knitting especially I've been thinking about like counting and breathing and making mistakes and how, how you can use that as a coping tool. Especially for, I've mostly done it with kids, but with adults too of if they're not particularly open to like mindfulness or grounding practices that you see more traditionally, doing something that looks like you're just creating something, but you're also actually taking care of yourself.
- A That's wonderful.
- B It's like tricking you into to mindfulness and then also thinking about using needles, when you're embroidering, when you're puncturing or stabbing something and you're like, it could potentially be like replacement for if you're needing to destroy or self harm, but you're puncturing, especially when it is taught on an embroidery hoop, but you're also building, creating something new, covering up scars, whatever.
- A Great metaphors.
- B That's kind of some of the stuff I've been thinking about. So yeah.
- A I never thought about the puncture one before but that's, wow. It's an intense one because seriously, sometimes it takes a lot to get that needle through.
- B And you're worried you're going to break the needle or something.
- A Right.
- B Yeah.
- A So the thing that's supposed to be strong, or intersecting becomes the vulnerable piece.
- B Yeah. And is the needle, a tool that you're using or are you the needle?

A Right. Are you the fabric?

B Yeah. Are you all of it? Is that something that's happening inside of you, is someone doing it to you?

A That's really cool.

D The answer of course is probably yes to all of this. There's a Syrian artist whose name I'm completely forgetting who uses really beautiful paper and creates imagery on the paper just by puncturing holes. She had a show at The Hammer recently and the evocativeness of the imagery...

B Were they backlit

D They weren't even backlit. It was very nuanced, very subtle. It's a really good luck. Mm hmm.

C The needle makes me think too about medical trauma, because like you get poked so many times usually, and how that could be.

B Yeah, totally. And then if you're allowed to have ownership over that needle.

D That'd be good for your cancer thing. I'm just thinking of my own experience, you know, having a child and because I was 46 when I gave birth to her, I was in the doctor's office like every single week practically. And I was poked and prodded so many times that I think women that might be, you know, it'd be really valuable for anybody who's going through a lot of medical procedures.

B Yeah, definitely. I have a client, most of my clients have a lot of like medical trauma, so that's a cool thing to think about. But I have a client with a lot of medical trauma that's like re triggered every week, but he's also going blind so it really limits like what I can do with him. So we've been doing like clay and stuff, but I'm just thinking about how to get needles evolved. I'd be very curious. Like I have yarn needles, so like something bigger maybe. Or I also plastic needles.

A I was going to say plastic.

B If there's a way to do that and sew into clay, or something like that could be really cool, but also work for someone that's losing their vision.

A Yeah, sewing it to clay seems like it would be difficult because if it starts to separate someone without vision might not see it, starting to crack. But maybe something like, like a thick, nice thick, felt a soft really mushy piece of, of fleece

or something that's, or maybe even a knitted sweater, like an old sweater.

R I think we have so much good...

[laughter]

R And I'm like, it's about time to start making some art? The prompt is to look at the materials and make something,

B That's a good prompt.

57. 29

Focus Group Semi-structured Interview

R I think first since everyone has been quiet and engaged in their process, I'd like to hear a little bit about your process of working with textiles, what you made, and any reflections on that.

A I guess I approached it like, it's hard to narrow it down and starting in one place. I think I was so excited to actually have time to do stuff, my aspirations were a little larger than realistic to the timeframe.

B That's so cute.

A I was really just looked at like the textures I was drawn to, and tried to start with one central piece and the colors and I tried to stay really joyful, but again, as it always does with art therapy, it always goes deeper. And I realized this piece ended up being about, you know, I started like, mm, okay. I want this to be just some quite simple piece. Um, one central thing. And I wanted to combine all the different techniques we were talking about earlier because they were just so interesting to me, like a little bit of the rugging thing, which I didn't do, a little bit of the, I think what I ended up doing was a lot of knotting and embroidering, and trying to just make a bunch of the textures combined. I originally, it doesn't look anything like what I originally sought out to do, of course. I just kind of started putting things down and then realize, oh my gosh, it's the course of my marriage right there. And it's kind of coming, the way I was working I was hoping to go full circle, but as far as the materials go, it really did come full circle with what my process was, with putting everything in. It started out very hopeful, centrally hopeful, and I think that still remains the center. Should we talk about that part too, or just the process of actually physically making it?

R Yeah, yeah, any reflections.

A Okay. And the base of it, my last name is Ruby, my maiden name is Ruby, so I wanted red as the base. But it also changes and morphs with whatever's going around me. So that's okay that it fades it, you know, it turns into something different. And how everything got tangled was really surprising for me. Like, the first thing I tried to do was double the yard and put it in and like loop it through one of the flowers and that's where my first thing was. Everything got like all jumbled up, and I had to wrap it around a different way and adapt. And then I started sewing it through and it looks like a jumbled mess. And I just think it's really interesting because I don't know if that's where I am now or where I started out when I was in graduate school.

Because that was kind of a crazy time for me too. And then kind of working through, and then the joy underneath all of it. This ribbon with the flowers in it. It's actually something I used, and this too, were actually things that I used to tie our wedding invitations together. And that was after the first year of graduate school that summer. And I mailed invitations, I was a graphic designer before this. That was like my last big design project. So this was like incasing, as like growth, and hope, and harmony, and all those things. But it was really like this wool, this boiled wool stuff that you have was just so intriguing. I actually really wanted to go all the way around with that, but it started wandering. And I don't know what that's about yet, but this wirey, structurey loose stuff, someplace in the middle and towards the end of the green. I don't think this is the end of like represents the length of the marriage.

I don't think that, I don't know what that is yet, but it's definitely transforming to something else here, or I'm remembering what I am, and there's a great big jumble, and it seems to be smoothing itself out. But it's interesting that because I made this and put this on last, it's like a nice little, pretty low. So maybe it's me coming to peace with, okay, this is really okay and it looks pretty and it's all organized and now let's see what else happens with the rest of it.

R Thank you.

A You're welcome.

R D, are you ready to share next? Any reflections on your own process of working with textiles?

D I loved deconstructing the textiles, so I realized I was working with layers, and they have a lot of meaning to me. And I'm trying to stitch back something that reconstructs itself after it's been so deconstructed. The bottom layer is not as deconstructed as the middle layer. I look forward to finishing. I'm adhering with the gold threads. So it's layers of a reconstruction is really what it is, in a mesh that was pretty much torn apart, except that even when you tear the middle layer apart, the bottom layer is, I realized that I started deconstructing it after it's so, hmm. So, um, the bottom layer is pretty solid. It's not going to destroy it.

I think I'm excited to finish this and one of the things I want to do is pull out a thread. So I want to just, let's just see if I can pull out a thread all the way across. So I want to see, it's almost like a math problem. I want to see how many I can pull out. And there's so many metaphors about that. You know, like the rug getting pulled out from underneath you, and all of that. And still have a foundation left, on which I can make something on the surface of self-representation. So what happened for me is the process emerged into a metaphor itself, of layers, and the stability of self.

- A It looks like you're adding stability into it as you're reconstructing the center of it.
- D Well, I think that's a good comment. I think that there's both, that there's destabilizing and stabilizing concurrently, but the notion that I can continue to lose threads and that it will hold together is reassuring.
- C Wow, that's cool.
- B Even the way that you're holding it so tenderly when you pull the threads, it's really interesting.
- D I think that's a really good observation because part of it was I tried to use this, but I realized that it had to be my hands. I couldn't really use an external frame I had to use only my body. And I quite loved making it, and I really want to finish, although, you know, it's kind of a mess.
- R Thank you.
- B I wasn't thinking when I, I was just over there looking at the materials. I was very energized from talking about the different stuff and I saw that gold thread and I was like, well, I have to use that and I'll figure out the rest. And I was, I just wanted to wrap and make a bundle of material with the gold thread. And then later I found this pomp pom. I was like, oh, that's way easier. And I think it's so ugly, this little red one, and I put it in there. I wanted to make sure it got its way in. This guy I didn't think was going to make it in there and I just shoved it in at the last second. You can actually pull it out and put it back in. But it was just thinking about the gaps in the weaving and how we can leave them there. And like usually you know, you put your weaving on a stick or some way to hold it up, but this is all, you could just pull it apart, but it still is holding together. And you can like add new things into those gaps that maybe have been there since the beginning, but there's space so they'll stretch and you can put new things in.

So I was really just playing and I was, I was thinking about the frustration that comes with dealing with thread and like anything, not just fibers, but when it's a spool of something, because you spend so much time making sure that it's not knotted. And I was just making me think about at home when generally you buy

something and you have to unravel the whole thing and rewrap it so that it will work for you. And I was thinking about how much patience that has created for me and it's like a way of taking care or a metaphor, parallel process of taking care of, because I hate doing it, but I know I have to do it. And thinking about people that don't have patience to do that and how that changes the work or maybe they don't do the work. Um, so it made me think a lot about patience and gaps.

R Thank You.

C When I started this, I knew I wanted to incorporate every technique that we talked about, because I was thinking about, just coming together as a group and working with other artists and art therapists who enjoy working with fibers. And so I wanted to kind of capture how special it is to be able to have these three hours. So I started with my technique with the rug hooking, because I wanted to start with what I was most comfortable with. And then I moved into weaving, then I moved into embroidery, which was a struggle for me, but I stuck to it and was kind of reassured again why I, I think embroidery is beautiful, but I just don't think it's beautiful when I do it. Like that piece you shared was so special, Deborah, and I don't think I can make something that beautiful with embroidery, but, so I did that. And then I went back to some more rug hooking with some wool roving. And then I added the felt last and the felt, um, I was like stitching it in and with my embroidery again, which I wasn't too happy about it. And then I did a little bit more weaving, which I felt kind of like was bringing it all together, which makes sense because weaving does that metaphorically. So kind of thinking about how like the weaving ended up being the thing that brought up all of our different techniques together. I wasn't really thinking about any shape or design, but it kind of reminds me of a landscape, and all the mountains and the valleys. So it kind of reminds me of my drive to work, (laughs) which is, I don't know, it's kind of relaxing and soothing for me. So, yeah, that's all.

R Wonderful. We've got 30 minutes left.

Okay so we were talking a little bit before about art and craft division, and so I want to know if, do you think that textiles do occupy an overlooked, underappreciated space within art therapy and why is that and how can we incorporate textiles is more into clinical art therapy.

A I think people like, you know, it's the go to because of the cost and location and time, pens and paper are always the first thing that we go to. Um, I like to add color, you know, all those different drawing things too, just because it's the most transportable for me. I like it better than tempura pens, even though it's a little bit more loosey goosey with people. But in some ways I think it actually, it's nice to, when I think of it, to bring along things that are touchable.

And I think that it does offer something that, especially when working with people with trauma, it's important to have things for them to touch, and possibly

even bring home as a transitional object. So I think, and I've done that a lot with my clients too, is like I've had them make things that either we've made together, and they bring home, to reinforce what they need to do when they're home, or at the end or for termination.

But in the process of healing, winding, and wrapping, and layering and you're taking everything apart and I think that the tactile part of it is what we get away from, especially now with the digital age stuff, it's important to get our hands back in so we get more sensory input involved with our work too. So I think it just serves lots of different reasons, but I think it's also just a stretch as far as like time and resources and that's mostly the limiter coming full circle to what I started with.

B Yeah, I think time is a huge one because like even us talking about these different techniques, I keep thinking back to my clients now and being like they aren't going to buy into that because I imagine most of them thinking I don't have the time to commit to this, like I have bigger things that I need to be thinking about, or working on. This really slows you down, makes you focus on like, it takes so long to make a small little patch, which I think is beautiful and so meaningful and has so many metaphors, but for people to be comfortable committing to that I think can be difficult.

A I actually think but in the process, like you, I forget who was saying doing little by little by little, so introducing small projects and then getting bigger or doing small projects that can lead to a bigger project might be a tangible way. A realistic way to do that. Yeah. Because while they're building the patience to actually be sitting and peacefully doing something, they're starting to create, like as we plant seeds of ideas, it's growing with them.

B It's a very visual representation of their growth and change and the work that they're putting in. Yeah.

A It's a slow as the growth, in some cases.

C I think, time is, I think one thing that kind of prohibits me from using fiber arts. Um, but also mostly I think part of the reason why I use time as an excuse is when I think about when I write my note and how I can justify the amount of time because I only did like one intervention and um, which was here's some art materials and work. I think that it's kind of hard to justify, even though I know that there's a lot of really good work being done while working with these materials.

A But I wonder if that, okay, so your environment, because you said you were in a DMH facility, I wonder if that perspective would change if you weren't having to write an empirical justified note.

- C Definitely.
- A Would you be able to justify, I think there's so many things, benefits to doing it that we can't write notes about necessarily. It's an intervention, but it really is a multifaceted intervention.
- C Yeah.
- B Even like is your role at your agency an art therapist or therapist?
- C I'm an outpatient therapist, but I use art in all of my..
- B I think if you're in a role called art therapy, I think there's also more leeway, you know, all about how you work in that system or what context you're doing the work in.
- A Or maybe you creatively write notes.
- C Right. I think that's it. It's like I just needed to get more creative in how I write these notes to make it seem like I provided tons of intervention.
- A Because you are.
- C Right. Yeah. I just need the words...
- A Break it down.
- C Right.
- B In the way that, yeah. Like fiber arts are so layered, there's different interventions layered in there that you're just not verbalizing.
- C Yeah. And then the client isn't in verbalizing too. Cause I feel in DMH it pushes you to the client always verbalizing what's going on and that's really more so for the benefit of the therapist. The client doesn't need to verbalize the processing that's happening for them.
- B It can take away like...
- C Right.
- B It's nice to know that there's always those things working in the background in your body or subconscious. And when you start to have to say them all out loud, then it's like almost makes you ignore some of the stuff that's going on.
- A You're naming it.

- B Yeah. It like allows you to be working in the background and just leave it there and you don't have to...
- A Sometimes you don't want to say things out loud, that's the whole of doing the art
- C Right
- A You know it doesn't have to be said, but you can intuitively understand what's happening with yourself and with your client.
- C Yeah.
- R So I'm also wondering how gender plays a role in textile art making, in your opinion. And this could be personally or clinically, and whether it influences who you use textile materials with?
- A I think it just depends on the person that I'm working with and what their issues are. Because I have some men who are completely open to doing this, and they're not the kind of people you would imagine would be open to it. Um, so I don't think, and then I know some women who just don't want to go near it for whatever reason, maybe they're brought up having to do it in school or you know. But I did, once I did a whole textile thing at a rehab that I was working at all, mostly, like 90% gay men. And I brought fabrics and I forget what the directive was, it was probably something like make something that represents a part of yourself you want to change, or I don't even remember. But they all ended up getting so playful and bouncing off each other, and passing each other things to work with. And trying things on and really getting animated in a way that they didn't always get when they did the art. They got very serious and quiet a lot of times, but it became really interactive, and I loved it, and they asked for it again.
- B I think that's, you're just being up like a bigger point too of like fiber arts in a group setting as individuals is so different.
- A That's true.
- B The way that you're watching, like when your dynamics are the fibers that you're playing with. That's really cool, I love that. And I'm just imagining the visual of when material is being passed and then passed back, you're weaving like each other actions. That's cool. But yeah, I think when I was working with kids, I was able to do more fiber work and it was almost exclusively with younger boys that I was doing the work with. And there was this space where they would try on like turn the pieces of fabric into clothing and play. But then like there, I think maybe they think they were at, or maybe it is just the era we're living in now, like there weren't any of those preconceived notions about fiber art, or it wasn't there yet for them.

- A How old were they?
- B Like seven and 10.
- A Oh yeah.
- B Yeah. And so it was this kind of reopening up of play, which normally I think dress up, we think of with girls. I wasn't prompting that at all, it was like we're doing art, and then it would become dress up and then back to art, and then, yeah.
- A Did you notice that they were superheroes?
- B There was some superheroes, there was also like just using it to be a different role. Now I'm the teacher or I'm going to wear this cape around, but it's not as a superhero. It allows me to like have flourish when I turn or whatever.
- A So play came into it.
- B Yeah. And I'm thinking too, even with like ribbon, I had a client that would, I would give him ribbon, and he would cut it all up into little pieces because he just needed that, that action. And then sometimes that turned into play too where it'd become a confetti party. Like it was just interesting in the ways that it would turn into play but then turned back into art and just like morph between them. Yeah. There would never any discussions of like, this is for girls.
- A Yeah. I never got that either. Although, you know what though, actually I can mention in that one group, I think one of them did mention like they were supposed to end this with somebody who's incredibly creative and artistic and it was always discouraged for him to do anything that was creative with his hands at all. Yeah. He's an art director. He's a really amazingly talented guy. But yeah, it was completely discouraged and frowned upon because he was a boy. But it also, I think it's also a Latin culture thing too for him. I think that culture plays a big role. Yes. Growing up in Los Angeles, you know, with all the diversity we have here I think does afford more openness than if we were in Kentucky or something. So I think demographics and all that stuff plays a huge role perhaps.
- R So we've talked a little bit about groups and children, but are there any specific diagnoses or populations that you think textiles would be particularly helpful for?
- A Trauma, anxiety, adhd...
- B adhd
- A I think even, autism or aspergers, getting somebody to connect. And sharing, you know, going back and forth and making something together could be a form of communication and collaboration.

- B The tactile stuff could be potentially difficult to use.
- A You have to be really careful which ones to use...
- B Yeah.
- A Because there are the sensory sensitivities and stuff, but depending on the kid and the level where they are on the spectrum, it could be, I'm talking about I guess more Asperger's more end Asperger's is what I'm thinking.
- B I'm thinking too, I've done more the collage style work with children on the spectrum that are on the higher end too. But I think when you have a table of materials and you have the control on what to touch and what to engage with, in an exploratory way, yeah, it gives you agency to reject feelings or explore ones that maybe kind of scare you.
- A So you can go to the safest one first. I noticed that last week when I was working with adults, and I did a workshop for early childhood educators. And I had them make valentines and I had some fabric out, I had paper stuff out, I had pens out, I had collage stuff. It was all little containers of everything, stickers, and it was interesting to see which people went to what materials. I think they do definitely start with what feels more comfortable. And I think each of you did that, I think each of us kind of did that too. So giving the option to start someplace like that makes it safe for, I think maybe for people to test boundaries, when things are scary or unsafe, especially with trauma situations, getting back to that. Learning how to trust somebody again, if you're working with somebody else in the group, working in dyads or with your therapist, or even as a group.
- R That kind of brings me to another question I have and I'm getting a sense from what you guys are saying, when working with clients using textiles is the client coming into therapy already with a textile based skill, in your experience, or is the therapist teaching the client a way of manipulating the materials?
- A Teaching.
- B Definitely from my experience.
- R Okay. So all exclusively teaching.
- C I think it's fun too to provide the clients with a variety of fiber working materials and then let them experiment with it. And I try not to do too much teaching. If they can't figure something out I'll be like, oh well I don't know, what do you think? And like kind of push them towards doing problem solving. Because I think it gives them a real strong sense of efficacy to be able to manipulate these materials and learn on their own.

- A Oh that's a good point. Like working with kids that are really self-conscious or really low self-esteem and it really does help them build a sense of purpose and encourages them to keep on feeling empowered to do things.
- B I agree at a teaching feels like an inaccurate, like I'm not educating them on processes, it's like here are things, let's figure out how you can manipulate them. If you have questions, I can answer questions, but it's not like, and even like with weaving, like I'll have the loom, but then it's like, what do you want to do with it? How do we make this into something? It's not like we're going to weave today, or we're going to knit. It's like we're working with this material and we'll figure it out together.
- A When you do the loom stuff, do you set stuff up? Do you already have the base parts set up for them and say, okay, let's go? Or do you let them figure out that part too?
- B I think in the past I have done partial set up on my own, but what I've actually done is built a loom out of the materials that I already have available to them, like cardboard and hot glue. So I'll make a little loom and then put the string on it, but it's all right there so that they can see, they can just figure it out, with their eyes, like, how it was made.
- R Okay. What am I not asking that, that you'd like to talk about.
- C One thing that comes from it, because when I started, when I pursued art therapy education, I had a lot of fiber background, and that's kind of where most of my art was at that time, and still is. I was thinking about it like, how can I incorporate this into art therapy? And I think the time management part kind of steered me away. But I was thinking about how like quilting groups are therapeutic, like that's group therapy, and like how I'd love to see more of that. Even knitting groups, that's therapeutic, and how to incorporate that into art therapy more, where you just meet up and make, you know, work on your project. And the conversations that happen in those groups I think can be really therapeutic.
- B The less formal, less explicitly therapy.
- A They're like a support, like a support group almost like,
- C Yeah. And I like, I kind of view it too. It's like, um, oh, what is it called? Oh, I forget her name. The art therapist from Chicago. Who does the open?
- A Pat Allen
- C Yeah, like that could easily, I think, I think like that is kind of a close, close to like the knitting circles or quilting circles, they can kind of relate.

- B It's back to that not having to verbalize everything. You're working through stuff, but you don't have to be talking about it. It's happening and you're around other people. You've got that support system that gets stronger every time you go and every time you work on your stuff.
- C Right.
- R That reminds me of another question I have actually but if people have other things they want to share, but in terms of whether the final product is image based or not image based, how the processing of the product happens. It's come up a bunch in my literature of some, some people saying it's not art therapy because, because of the craft element of it and the lack of an image. For example, knitting a scarf.
- A That it's not art therapy, or it's not a craft? What'd you say?
- R That it's not art therapy when you're using it from a, from a real craft space. So let's say that you're weaving like a fairly traditional wall tapestry and it has no, there could be sentiments to the materials like we've discussed, but let's say they're not using images.
- B I feel like it's all about intention, like that could be said about any medium and art therapy. It's like what mindset are you going into it with? And like what are you trying to get out of it? Because if you're knitting a scarf, you could be working on frustration tolerance and mindfulness and things like that and still be, I think it really is just about your intentions. Because you could say that about like, you know, drawing a portrait of a person.
- A Yeah.
- B Which could be their art therapy or not also, like the figurative versus abstract versus functional.
- A What you're paying attention to while you're making it and if you're paying attention to what you're doing, that comes up in the process of making it. I don't think it matters whether it's in the context of art or in art therapy. I mean, I don't, I, I think that the craft actually can be incredibly therapeutic. And even if you don't think about it until after you're done with it, I think that counts too.
- B Yeah. How are you presenting it? Do you share it with someone? This is a scarf, that you knit, and then you're just putting in a box, like what is that, right? It's, yeah. I feel like it's all about how you approach that process and that object.
- A Right.

- C Yeah. And I think like it's therapeutic to learn a new skill and to try it and to work through challenges and to succeed or not to succeed in that, and that is therapy.
- A Yeah.
- C So like you make a scarf, and you didn't know how to make a scarf before, or maybe you didn't know how to make a scarf, but whatever it is that you're processing, maybe made it challenging to commit to finishing that scarf and you're doing therapeutic work through that.
- A Maybe it's the first time that you really feel proud of something you accomplished for yourself too. You know, like, wow, I did something and I'm proud of it and I want to share it with everybody for the first time, you know? And then what's that like? You know, I'm bringing that back into therapy like, oh my gosh, I felt really self-conscious at first, but then I got some validation and can we do it again? Cause it was really cool. My friend wants one and you know, blah blah blah blah.
- B Totally, my friend wants one, that just opened up like a whole other thing of how you're using it to engage with other people, and what do you tell them about this process?
- A Right. Right. Yeah.
- B Exciting to think about. It just opens up so many avenues. Yeah.
- R This is perfect segue.
- [laughter]
- R How does textile making influence your social life? What's the overlap between making with textiles and socializing or is there one?
- B I mean I think what Meg was saying about the knitting groups is really interesting and even in thinking about how Meg taught like a little felting group, like using that as an excuse for social interaction. You know, maybe it's hard for you to get out of the house. Like I know for me it's so I could knit at home, but bringing knitting somewhere, knitting outside. I've not gone to a knitting group, but in my heart I'd be like, oh hell yeah.
- A It's really fun actually.
- B Yeah. Yeah. And so I think that it is, since I started more seriously working with different fiber arts, it allows me to engage with people. The same with like, if you start watching a sport, and then you can talk to people about it.

- A You're getting to know stuff. It's a whole other, like almost like a subculture.
- B And it stretches your brain in a different way to be like, oh, I can weave with that, oh, I could put this in here. You start to look at the way your clothes are made differently, or can I unravel this sweater and reuse it?
- A That's true. Yeah.
- R I love where that's going and I'm wondering in our last couple of minutes just to bring up some of the other things that are unique maybe to textile making versus other crafts, that are why we want to use them, and why we might want to use them with our clients. And a lot has been mentioned such as mindfulness, stretching your brain.
- A I think it's just comfort. It's reassuring. It's like, you know, like being wrapped in a warm blanket kind of thing. You know, like for me it's really about, oh my gosh, can I, can I hold this and will it be soft and comfy and safe.
- B Fiber is so integral to so many parts of our life and it expands. Pen and pencil, you use it to draw. You're like, oh like that is fiber, what I'm wearing, is fiber, and like when you start to think about it as like integrated into your life. I think it has so many opportunities for comfort and for exploration but also for metaphor, which is so important to art therapy. It's, yeah, so fruitful.
- A I like the transportable nature of it too. Because you really, I mean you can just carry a little thing and a little thing.
- B And a tiny little loom.
- A You could, and then all of a sudden you have a way of interacting with people and a way of noticing yourself in spaces, and it's neat. You're bringing places where you are into the pieces you're doing. Like okay, I'm over here and this plant, grows over here,
- B Yes, I was just thinking of sitting in the grass, picking up some of the grass, putting it into your piece.
- A Yeah.
- R One of my questions was how does the role of time affect textile creation, which I've heard a lot of there's not enough time. And then with that, a little bit of it can provide contemplative time when you're gathering or when you're thinking about ideas. I'm wondering if there's anything else about time as a challenge, or even a potential benefit, whether it could be overcome in some way.

- A I love that you lose track of time, that you think you don't have enough of it and then all of a sudden it's like, oh, it was just a priority thing, sometimes. Or maybe I was just afraid of what it, you know, how long it would take, but it really didn't take that long and wow, look how fun it was. I think the playful factor is what I always come back to too. It's like, wow, I really got to just relax. I really got to just use my hands and a different way.
- B You talking about the passage of time really like makes me think about clients that, you know, it's hard for you to sit still, or let, like you want time to pass, because you're like, it's hard for me to bear. But if you are using this as a tool to pass time, if you don't sleep at night and you're like okay I'm gonna just do this and that helps time pass. And you get through it, and you're not alone because you're with this thing that you're making.
- A That's wonderful. Yeah.
- B It can be really making a safe space for yourself even though the passage of time can be unbearable. It's like reframing it a little bit.
- A I love that.
- B I also think like within a session it can be containing, like the way that we all walked over here and we're overwhelmed by the opportunities. When you have 45 minutes to work on something, you're like okay, I'm gonna make something really small. Or maybe you make a small thing every time and you build it into something like a quilting situation. But I think in general it can be limiting, but also containing, and help you get started on something cause we were just going to be small.
- A You know what though, that just reminded me, cause like I, the 45 minute thing went out the window in terms of like how big of a piece I was going to make. I just got so lost in it. And I think that's a possibility too, is that, you know, , for learning about your client too, like are their goals too expansive. Are they realistic, are they, you know, a really good assessment tool.
- B Yeah.
- A I was aware of that for myself right away.
- [laughter]
- A So I think that you can learn a lot about, you know, if they're realistic, are they making, is there something that's sustainable? Are they able to recognize that themselves or do they need assistance doing it?

- B Do they self sabotage...
- A Yeah. Yeah.
- B How safe do they feel with the amount of the time they have that there? Are they able to explore and get creative or is it very rigid?
- A I think that's great. Right. And if I don't get it done, I just don't want to start it at all. Yeah. If it's not going to be just right. I don't want to do it.
- R Okay. So it's our final kind of minute here. If anyone has any last words that they want to get into the discussion.
- A Thank you.
- B Yeah, just talking about it with other, it just really helps you open up your brain more. This is like great, so energizing.
- R I want to thank all of you so much for coming today and making my research possible, and I'm so inspired by everything that everyone's made and, and by everything that you've said about pulling this into clinical work as well.